

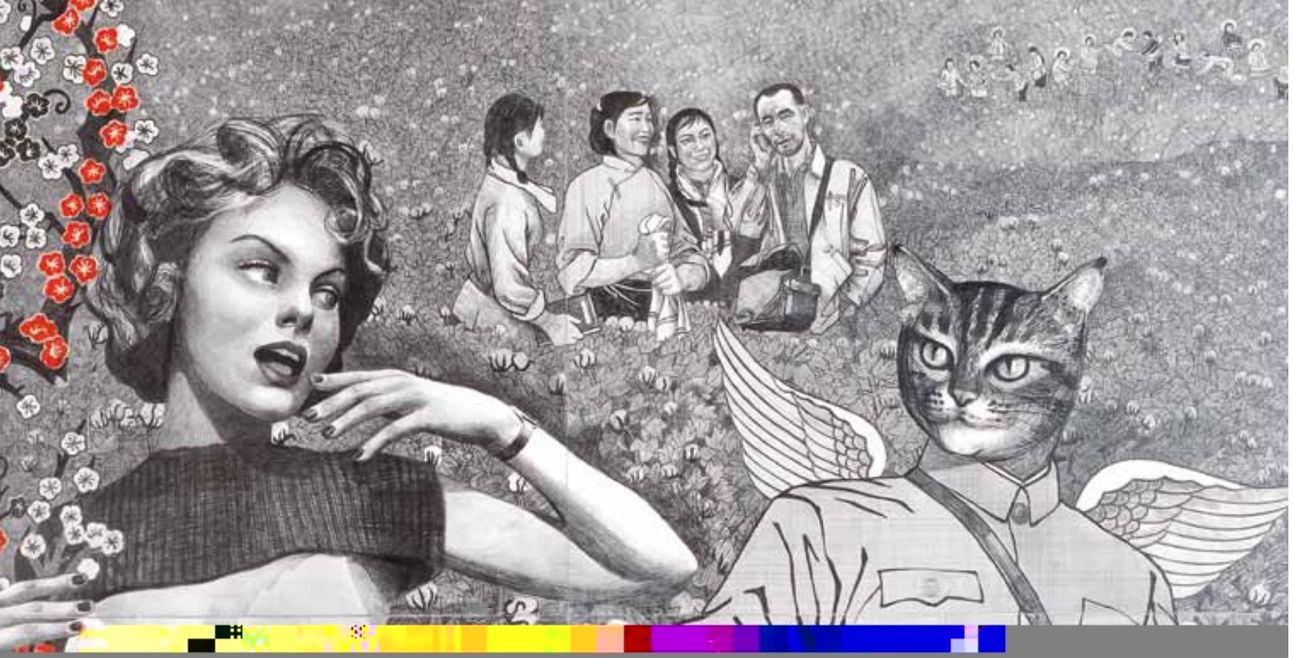
Ink

The Art of China

墨

MICHAEL GOEDHUIS

INK: THE ART OF CHINA



Ink

The Art of China

MICHAEL GOEDHUIS

at the

SAATCHI GALLERY

DUKE OF YORK'S HQ | KING'S ROAD

LONDON SW3 4RY

render this traditional medium relevant and meaningful to the modern world – without too great a concern for the demands of the market.

So this first comprehensive study of the New Ink Art in an institution of international stature is exceptionally timely. It coincides not only with the growing awareness of this vital contribution to contemporary Chinese culture in general but in particular to the current revival of interest in artistic fundamentals after the excesses of the last years. A new generation of art lovers has become aware of the paradox that the ink artists, who return to the wellspring of Chinese culture as a source of inspiration and creative refreshment are actually, in Britta Erickson's words: 'the most idealistic and intellectually daring of China's artists'.

And the consistent rhythm of experimentation that is in evidence in the wide range of works in this exhibition, from the cultural sensitivity of Liu Dan to the ground-breaking video works of Qiu Anxiong, describes a diverse output that provides a cultivated audience with the opportunity to enjoy not only the subtle connections with the literati past but also the artists' engagement with the realities of contemporary life.

It is then the theme of this exhibition to define just how innovative and audacious the best of these exponents are. Just as Cézanne and Picasso assimilated the work of Raphael, Poussin, Velazquez and other old masters to develop their own revolutionary language, so the ink artists are grappling with the same challenge – how to express the transformation of their society into works that are meaningful precisely because they take account of the past in order to make sense of the present.

We are deeply grateful to the many lenders who have so generously parted with their works for so long, to the distinguished scholars who have contributed so generously to the value of the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, and finally to the Saatchi Gallery and to its director Nigel Hurst for opening its doors to us and to Ink: The Art of China.

Michael Goedhuis



Li Jin
Spring in the Garden (detail), 2012 (p. 130)



Wenda Gu
The Mythos of Lost Dynasties, C Series No. 6: Cloud & Water, 1996-1997
(p. 176)

for different purposes, for fifty years after that. But as has happened on many levels throughout the discourse between the traditional and the contemporary in Asia, traditional art forms have taken on the quality of archeological sites which artists, critics and curators alike have been (re)discovering and (re)examining from the giant dig of the 21st century. But at the same time, just because these artistic traditions constitute part of the substrata on which their culture is built, there is also another level of engagement, which many Chinese contemporary artists themselves have recognized (and described) as visceral, subconscious and intuitive. Wenda Gu, who first made his reputation in the 1980s in his subversive/nonsensical 'error-word' calligraphies, describes a childhood memory that opened an early portal in his mind through which a connection to Chinese painting would eventually be formed:

> In 1961, I was six years old. My grandmother took me by train to my hometown of Shangyu in Zhejiang province. When we were passing the mountains near Hangzhou, I asked her what exactly they were. She said that they were mountains. It was my first time to see mountains. I have remembered this dialogue with my grandmother until this day.

All quotations from artists come from private correspondence between the author and the artists undertaken in November and December 2011

Gu says that throughout his years of studying and teaching Chinese landscape painting at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in Guangzhou in the early to late 1980s, to his creation of 'concept ink painting' after 1987, and his subsequent years as an installation and performance artist, his connection to the world of mountains and nature – a connection at the heart of literati art – 'can be seen everywhere . . . this is a way of living, a subtle influence in my blood, and a subconscious experience.'

Some artists, such as Li Huayi, Pan Gongkai and Li Xubai, engage through landscape painting and calligraphy in contemporary explorations of the tradition within the parameters of its motifs and materials: this is a conscious and necessary choice for them. For Qin Feng, whose paintings and installations draw on metaphysical elements of Chinese calligraphy, experimentation came first and foremost on a material level, through the deliberate choice to expand the scope of his painting beyond the boundaries of 'Eastern' or 'Western':

> Brush, ink and paper are only mediums; they should not be viewed as definitional marks that separate/differentiate Eastern art forms from their Western counterparts. My approach to such conventional Eastern and Western expressive languages and media as ink, paper, oil, and canvas is to interchange and mix them so as to challenge and destabilize the ideas of boundaries and traditions.

Others, such as Wilson Shieh and Qiu Zhijie, play with the idea of juxtaposition, on a level related to but also extending beyond the Surrealist concept of this approach. Pierre Reverdy, the French Surrealist poet, wrote that:

> The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be – the greater its emotional power and poetic reality. (*Nord-Sud*, March 1918)

The juxtaposition of two realities also lies at the core of Shieh and Qiu's work, but rather than on the level of image, their 'poetic power' comes from the juxtaposition of the physical, material and semantic demands of traditional technique and contemporary content. Shieh uses a highly refined *gongbi* (fine-line) technique to create figurative works whose delicately drawn subjects exist within a beguiling, and unsettling pastiche of fragmented references to contemporary and traditional architecture, fashion, craft, high and low society and idealizations of beauty. Qiu Zhijie, a Hangzhou-based conceptual artist and theorist whose formal academy training in ink painting and calligraphy sometimes comes as a surprise, adopts the form of seal-style calligraphy associated with ancient inscriptions to write texts comprised of 'everyday' revolutionary slogans, creating multiple levels of resonance through a deceptively simple device.

The Taiwanese artist and curator Yao Jui-chung, known primarily for his conceptual photography and action art, describes how his first 'engagement' with the Chinese landscape tradition occurred when he was bored and restless during an artist's residency in a small town in Scotland:

> Sitting at the desk [of my studio] in front of a blank piece of drawing paper and looking over the endless green fields, memories of climbing mountains in Taiwan during my college days drifted before my mind's eye, and this perfect bucolic landscape was exactly the same. Having free time to explore, I thought I would just make some ink paintings, which is a tradition I had always avoided . . . After thinking for some time but not coming up with any answers, I looked out the window at the endless green hills and thought even if I have never



Qin Feng
Civilisation Landscape I, 2007
(p. 96)

Wilson Shieh
The Queen, 2007
(p. 39)



identified with traditional painting styles, I should make some landscape paintings. I went to the Internet to collect some information about late Ming painting, whose intentionally distorted or mannerist style has been much admired. Having selected some paintings from a web page, I printed them together on A4 paper and started looking for similarities between the work and my own experiences. Details in the images were often indistinct due to low resolution. Since traditional brushes and xuan paper were not available in this out of the way area of Scotland (I couldn't see any [texture-stroke] brush work in the paintings anyway), I just used a drafting pen, which I was accustomed to and had on hand. With dense pen strokes on coarse handmade Indian paper, I outlined the landscape to reflect whatever impressions came to mind, from hot springs, tea tasting, mountain climbing, flower appreciation, chess or the sound of breaking waves. Figures in the paintings were composed of cynics and monsters and were meant to allude to the societal chaos in Taiwan at the time. I was constructing narratives relating to ancient scholars being banished to the hinterlands, often combining several classical works to outline a hybridized narrative of my own ideal of living in seclusion amongst nature.

At the end of the day, metaphorically and ontologically, it all begins with the meditation on a red bamboo.

DOMINIQUE NAHAS

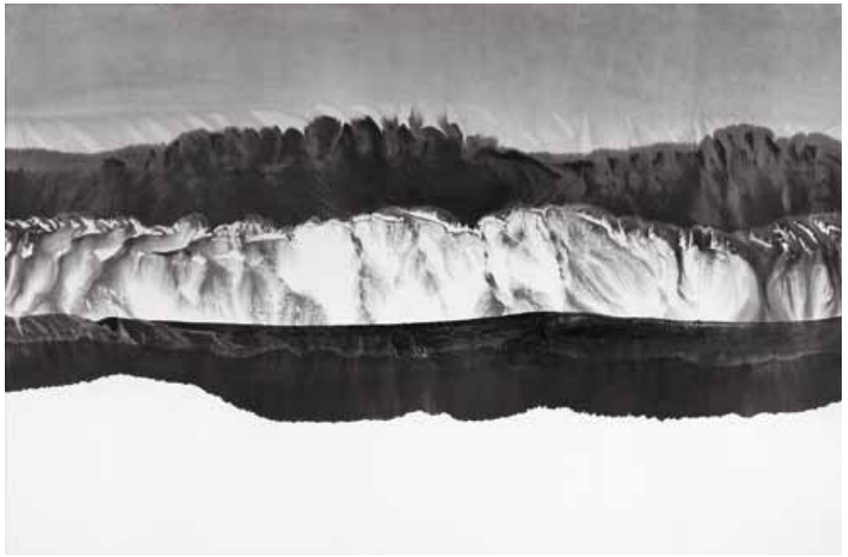
The Poetic Imagination in Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE INK PAINTING, however ancient and prestigious its historical and theoretical DNA, is perfectly suited to address or reflect the twenty-first century's dilemmas and contradictions. While a quality of timelessness unveils itself through ink painting so too does timeliness reveal itself through the hands of this form's contemporary masters.

What goes around comes around; the Book of Change, the *Yijing*, informs the structure of all Chinese ink painting, old and new, as a cosmological key. All image-making is form-making. It is ontological in essence. All form-making is constitutive *of* description and *as* description at both general and specific levels of potentiality and heterogeneity. The play of texture and linearity, the core of ink painting, is indicative of the phenomenon of energy, of arterial pulsation, of life itself. Through such play the theme of internal contrast and reciprocal becoming is made manifest in all ink painting. Such is the world of ink-painting, old and new.

The Michael Goedhuis exhibition INK at the Saatchi Gallery brings to the public a selection of works created by virtuosi of the hand. The process and technique of ink painting is arguably one of the most difficult of the visual arts to master; intractable in terms of the conditions it imposes on the artist; no erasures or changes are possible. Grace, suppleness, and vitality must exist in order for the viewer to connect with the work. No matter what the imagery, ink painting contains a dynamic that few other types of artworks can sustain: that of becoming and of simultaneity. This sensation of passing through engenders feelings of transience, tenuousness and loss. And yet if there is a cast of melancholy to ink painting, it is more than balanced by ink painting's undeniable capacity to elicit wonderment. While an essential principle of the complementariness of opposites (light/dark, open/closed, empty/full, East/West) pervades many of the works in INK as in Liu Dan's *Tinkling of Jade-Pendants*, Liu Kuo-sung's *Universe is My Heart #4*, Lo Ch'ing's *Ten Thousand Peaks of Red Leaves*, Pan Hsin-hua's *One Day* other works privilege juxtaposed rather than integrated clusters of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator. Lu Hao's *Landscape Series No. 23*, Chun-yi Lee's *Mao Triptych*, Xu Lei's *Tree of Blue Underglaze*, Wilson Shieh's *Ladyland Series* and Qiu Jie's *Mao in the Cotton Field*, for example, are works that have a deconstructive element provoking the viewer to become aware of the logic of binary oppositions.

Sensations of corporealisation and decorporealisation are part of the experience of viewing an art form that doesn't tolerate mistakes or reit-



Gao Xingjian
Dream Mountain (La montagne de rêve), 2005 (p. 120)

erations. There is often a sensation of gossamer translucency, an otherworldliness that pervades such work as in Wenda Gu's *Ink Valley and White Water*, Jia Youfu's *Work 1*, Liu Kuo-sung's *The Universe is My Heart No. 4*, and Yang Jiechang's *Tomorrow Cloudy Sky* series. Rapture suffuses Zhang Yu's *Divine Light Series* and Zhu Daoping's *Delicate Fragrance* while change and continuity wrestle with each other in Wucius Wong's *Sky Land Expression 1*, Qui Deshu's *5-Panel Mountainscapes*, and in Yang Jiechang's *Tomorrow Cloudy Sky* where a suggestion of apocalyptic doom pervades. Feelings of dreamy sensuousness are evoked by Yang Yanping' s *Autumn Song* and Gao Xingjian's *La montagne de rêve* in contrast to the tension between the natural environment and the man-made, seen in Qui Anxiong's *Flying South*, *Nostalgia*, and *New Book of Mountains and Seas*. Finally, several works in INK recall classical ink painting's relation to calligraphy and thus reassert calligraphy's corporeal and physiological dimension in updated and often quirkily irreverent ways as in the paintings of Xu Bing, Qin Feng, Qiu Zhijie, Wang Dongling, and Wei Ligang.

Contemporary Chinese ink painting takes many forms. In INK, panoramic variations co-exist within the genre in terms of approach, subject and content, yet each difference comes with its own visual and psychic attributes, its own emotional affinities and registers.

Ink painting brings us into contact with an immersive intimacy in which humanistic themes of man's relation to himself, to nature and to the other are played out against the great backdrop of constancy and change. What has moved me more than anything in the viewing and the assessing of such diverse image making in INK, large and small, is a quality of deep interiority that pervades all the work. John Berger in his essay 'The Place of Painting' (in *The Sense of Sight*, 1985) refers to the condition of revelation in measured and thoughtful ways. He writes: '. . . At the moment of revelation when appearance and meaning become identical, the space of physics and the seer's inner space coincide: momentarily and exceptionally she or he *achieves an equality with the visible*. To lose all sense of exclusion; to be at the centre.'

WANG TAO

The Archaeological Inspiration for Contemporary Chinese Art

THERE SEEMS TO BE A PARADOX in contemporary Chinese art. On the one hand, many artists have taken an avant-garde stand that differs profoundly from the classical tradition in Chinese art history. On the other hand, a number of artists, including the most radical ones, claim that they are the true representatives of China's grand tradition, and that their 'post-modern' art is the only way that upholds and continues that tradition. In the deconstruction and re-construction of the theocratic discourse, as well as in practical terms, archaeology plays a significant role. My article sets out to explore the interesting relationship between contemporary art and archaeology.

Looking first at the phenomenon known as 'Calligraphy-ism' (*shufazhuyi*), we see that many Chinese artists have tried to use Chinese writing, in particular ancient manuscripts, in their works. The classical tradition of calligraphy is based on writing with a brush and ink on paper, and these are thought of as soft materials. But, before the invention and widespread use of paper in the 1st century CE, most inscriptions were written on a wide variety of materials, such as animal bone, metal, stone, silk and bamboo. In fact, most of the early calligraphic works that have survived are on materials other than paper. Although the main writing implement at that time was the soft hair brush, many other tools were also used, such as sharp-pointed knives. The phenomenal archaeological discoveries of the past century or so, have revealed a wealth of ancient inscriptions on metal, wood, bamboo, stone and silk. These exciting new sources have enhanced the contemporary calligrapher's familiarity and ease with different styles of calligraphy. The concept of 'tradition' has inevitably become more fluid, as calligraphers are able to draw on much wider sources to develop their own technique and style. This parallels the development of the 'Stele School' of calligraphy (*beixue pai*) in the Qing dynasty which was inspired by the study of ancient inscriptions on bronze and stone (*jinshixue*). Some time later, at the end of the 19th century, the discovery of oracle bone inscriptions (carved on turtle plastra and ox scapulae) revealed for the first time the earliest writing of the Shang dynasty. The discovery of bamboo slips and silk manuscripts with inscriptions from the Warring States and Qin-Han periods have also increased the reservoir of ancient calligraphic styles. It is clear that many contemporary pieces of calligraphy have these ancient sources as their inspiration: the Shang dynasty oracle bone inscriptions, inscriptions on ancient bronzes, bamboo slips, silk and stone stele, and the

decorative styles such as 'bird script'. We can see that archaeology has become a major source of inspiration for new artistic experimentation, as modern artists find stylistic models in the newly unearthed archaeological material.

For many contemporary artists, archaeology not only provides a stylistic model, but also a conceptual framework. It has enabled an extension of the territory of Chinese modern art in a very fundamental way. In spite of the adoption of Western 'modernist' and 'post-modernist' language and methods of expression in China, the fact is that contemporary Chinese art, including calligraphic art, has grown up, quite distinctively, against a Chinese cultural backdrop. Even in Xu Bing's *Heavenly Script*

Xu Bing
At the Temple to the First Ruler of Shu, Poem by Liu Yuxi, Square Word Calligraphy, 2005
(p. 44)

there is a conceptual, as well as a stylistic link, with the 'magic script' of ancient Daoism. The tradition of the 'magic script' can be traced back to the late Han period, in the 2nd century CE, and the 'heavenly script' of the Daoist canon which was supposed to have been written in red pigment by spirits of the other world. In Daoist practice, secret codes and talismans were often written in a script that was unreadable except to the initiated. Mysterious and powerful, this writing was decipherable only by an accomplished Daoist master. Although the model for

For a brief discussion on the 'magic script', see Tseng Yuho, *A History of Chinese Calligraphy* (Hong Kong, 1993), pp. 75-96.

Xu Bing's style is not derived directly from the canon of the classical calligraphic tradition, it nonetheless borrows Daoist art and reinterprets it in a new social context. It is interesting to see how contemporary artists are inspired by ancient popular religious practices that had, and still have today, a strong influence on ordinary members of society.

It is the deep obsession with China's 'past' that has led the way for the success of contemporary calligraphy both in China and abroad. For some artists, this has meant a deconstruction and subversion of the traditional art. Wenda Gu has done interesting work in this respect, and has taken Chinese calligraphy into modern art installations. But, for many other artists, the attraction of looking to the past lies in finding a conceptual and stylistic model, and in recreating the cultural spirit of the original writing. We can see this in the works of Gu Gan, Wei Ligang and Qiu Zhijie, who are at the forefront of the modern calligraphy movement. In Gu Gan's work we see examples of how the artist employs and transforms different types of archaic scripts in order to achieve special pictorial effects in the composition. In Wei Ligang's recent work, he has turned towards the experiment of a 'line-movement'; his work may look at glance like a close relative of western abstract art, but is clearly inspired by the simplicity of the use of line in traditional Chinese calligraphy. Qiu Zhijie, on the other hand, seeks the direct correspondence with the ancient inscriptions found on early ritual bronzes and stone stele. The motivation of these artists is to re-invent the essence of old tradition in the process of transition. With the help of archaeology, they have found modernity in archaism. As the sinologist F. W. Mote pointed out, 'recovering the past' (*fugu*) is not just a revival of ancient styles, but a more general expression relating to one's consciousness of past models ('The arts and the "theorizing mode" of civilization', in C. F. Murck (ed.) *Artists and Traditions*; Princeton, 1976). The contemporary

artist may consciously create a new model, yet the past lives on in his or her works.

Is it right to talk about 'neoclassicism' in contemporary Chinese art? It is clear that we cannot avoid the question of tradition. For almost two decades, Chinese artists and critics, in particular the younger generation, have moved away from the heated debates of 'is the tradition of Chinese art dead?' to how can an artist 'bring life to the tradition'. Of course, in a new social context, the tradition cannot be maintained indefinitely. In order to put contemporary Chinese art into perspective, there needs to be some adjustment to the rigidly defined boundaries of the tradition of Chinese art. It would seem that T. S. Eliot's words are finding resonance with young artists in China today. He wrote that 'tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour' (T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and Individual Talent' in *Selected Essays;* New York, 1932).



Li Xubai
Heart of Zen Inspired through Cloud and Water, 2012



Qiu Zhijie
Ten Poems by Su Shi (video), 2004 (p. 124)

and the new aesthetic contexts in which they practice their art. In some significant cases, artists seek to adapt and exploit the latest technological possibilities within the borders of tradition. These paradoxical elements, within a known technical framework, are linked, in this exhibition, to experiments with new technologies that nevertheless remain neatly in step with basic, long established Chinese attitudes towards the visual arts and how they operate. I have space to give just one example. Some of the grandest and most impressive of the Chinese paintings inherited from the past are scrolls, which unroll laterally. As this unfolding takes place, parts of the composition are always concealed. The artists' intention was that the compositions should never be immediately visible as a totality. Modern museum displays, which show landscape scrolls flat and completely unrolled, contradict this, and spoil the intended effect. The videos offered here by two brilliant younger artists, Qiu Zhijie and Qiu Anxiong, restore this element of progression in time. It is no accident that what is shown, in each case, is essentially the movement of the brush – in one case, how the strokes of the brush disappear; in the other how they accumulate, modulate and become something different. One can perhaps see this as a metaphor for the exhibition as a whole. It reveals, but also sometimes conceals. What it offers cannot be grasped all at once.

EUGENE WANG

Ink Painting and its Modern Discontents

CHINESE INK PAINTING remains an embarrassment for critics looking for its 'contemporaneity.' Its abstract disposition carries a perennial up-to-date 'with-it' air. However, unlike usual forms of avant-gardism, it is steeped in a venerable past, thereby repeatedly fuelling radical and conservative arguments in equal measure.

The sticking point is often the question of what *is* Chinese ink painting? Its medium specificity is assumed: brushstrokes and ink gradations produce a combined effect non-replicable in other mediums. However, medium specificity, once hyped, is likely to reify an essentialist ink-painting lore harking back to *a priori* moment in the past; subsequent carnations are mere recapitulations, often paler ones.

The essentialist medium is itself a construct. At some point in history, an ink painting essentialism took shape. The ink painting, so it goes, essentially comes down to brush-and-ink interplay. The brush spells out contours and texturing strokes; the ink wash supplies contour-less tonal gradations. The brush expressivity derives from its wrist-controlled modes of applications with variable movements and speeds: centred, slanted, tipping, stippling, trailing, slashing, halting, dashing, etc. If the brush provides the plot line, the ink wash is the chorus. With its variable qualities—ranging from heavy soot-like smudge to diluted pale semi-diaphanous sheen—ink wash sings in various tonalities, or signals modes of enunciation: spurting or choking. A combination of these formal qualities results in an orchestrated theatre, albeit abstract in tenor: painting attains the condition of music.

This baseline dynamic changes over time. In fact, its iterations and inflections over time speak to various moments and contexts. The thirteenth century, for instance, evinced a taste for liberal ink-wash. In contrast, the fourteenth century favoured the austerity of dry and sparse brush-textured landscapes with a hushed disposition shunning liberal vocalization. Its chastened dryness enacts an abhorrence of material opulence, thereby speaking to eremitic stances and spiritual autonomy.

If the fourteenth century is remembered as a definitive moment in shaping values and taste accrued to ink painting, canonization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided its master storyline. Competition with Western painting media in the twentieth century further ossified the notion of the medium as a set of distinguished formal properties. Often overlooked is the new complexion the medium took on in the twentieth century owing to various cultural pressures and forces.

One notable episode is the 'modernization' of Chinese ink painting in the twentieth century. It began as a debate in the first decades of the last century over the status of Chinese painting:

is it a moribund medium too entrenched in the past, an Eastern resource that stood up against Western fashions, or a spiritual forerunner or distant twin of European modernism? Advocates of various ideological persuasions apparently cherry-picked facets from the evolving tradition of ink painting to fit their arguments. Schooled in Western drawing, reformists such as Xu Beihong (1895-1953) and his followers brought to ink painting an observational empiricism at the expense of traditional abstract quality. Ink-brushed simulations of Western charcoal drawing took ink painting to a different dimension – often with mixed results. It is painters such as Qi Baishi (1864-1957), largely unscathed by Western drawing, whose bold and liberal swaths of ink tonalities breathed new life into ink painting.

The 1980s was another formative moment. The dismantling of the Maoist-era ideological orthodox and visual idiom unleashed waves of experimentation. New paradigms were established:

WU GUANZHONG (1919-2010), a Paris-trained painter with a modernist sensibility, advocated 'formalism' to liberate painting from the decades' yoke of servitude to political ideological apparatus. Meanwhile, he also sought vigorously to wrest ink painting from the long-reigning tyranny of the brush-and-ink absolutism. There is, so Wu argued, more to ink painting than just the brush-and-ink interplay; dots, lines, and planarity are equally, if not more, viable qualities and organizing principles. Wu deflated the essentialism of the ink painting lore.

QIU DESHU'S (1948-) cracked-painting series in the early 1980s was among the most radical innovations in ink painting. Qiu traced water-saturated brushes on sheets of rice paper, causing its surface to crack. Layers of cracked sheets were then mounted on ink-primed or painted canvas so that they faintly manifest the base colour or ink underneath. Qiu's new method dispensed with the obligatory 'brush,' and made the contingency of cracked paper surface the primary mode of making images. So radical was it that critics defined it as 'modern ink painting' to distinguish it from the traditional ink painting.



Qiu Deshu
Five-panel Mountainscape (detail), 2005
(p. 170)

The inadvertent alignment of Liu Kuo-sung (1932-) and Wenda Gu (1955-) made a big splash. Liu, a Taiwan-based oil-painter-turned-ink-painter, experimented with the ink-painting medium in the 1960s. Like Wu Guanzhong, he slighted the brush-and-ink protocols and boldly refashioned the medium by physically re-texturing the rice paper and found ways of deploying un-brush-worthy brushes. He also made cosmic stratosphere and moonscape the subject of ink painting. Exhibitions of Liu's ink paintings in mainland China in the 1980s were timely. The reform-minded artists were experiencing a 'spiritual turn': deepening soul-searching in the post-Mao era led to a metaphysical reflexivity. Feverish reading of modern Western philosophy coupled with Western- and Japanese-mediated rediscovery of 'Eastern' mystic tradition (Chan/Zen, etc.) prompted a search for a formal model that could anchor this metaphysical angst. Liu's cosmic ink landscape answered this need. Gu was among the first to turn this model into a mystic transcendent landscape, as exemplified by his *Ink Valley and White Water* (1986), that embodied the metaphysical turn in the mid-1980s Zhang Yu's *Divine Light* series (1999) recapitulates this impulse.

Gu's cosmic ink painting was meteoric in its surge in the mid-1980s. Ink painting in general was not part of the avant-garde of the late 1980s. Feeling snubbed, ink painters launched the New Literati paintings to stake their claim on avant-gardism. While their irreverent ink-play recalls their pre-modern forerunners, they went even further: applying deliberately untutored brush strokes, they affect anti-elitist stances to distance themselves from literati tradition. Li Jin's *Feast* (2007) continues this streak.

New episodes of ink painting are being written, as the present exhibition demonstrates. So, stay tuned.



Wenda Gu
Ink Valley and White Water, 1986
(p. 174)

JASON KUO

Ink

INTRODUCTION

Looking at the diverse styles, themes, intellectual contexts and artistic careers of the artists represented in this exhibition and the accompanying catalogue, the viewer and the reader will immediately become aware of, and possibly be overcome by, the sheer range and complexity of the works on display. But they will also be rewarded by a deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese art in particular and Chinese society in general.

At first glance indeed, the exhibition seems to encompass such a great variety of styles that the identification of a central thesis might appear an elusive target. Let me however suggest several possible approaches to elucidate the concept that the curator, Michael Goedhuis, has tried to present – the vitality and relevance of ink art to the world today, both for China and beyond.

A good way to begin developing a grasp of the big picture may be by dividing the artists in the exhibition into the following broad categories:

NEO-TRADITIONALISTS

These artists rely on brushwork and ink or colour washes and include: Fang Jun, Gao Xingjian, Jia Youfu, Li Huayi, Li Jin, Tong Yang-tze, Li Xiaoxuan, Li Xubai, Liu Dan, Liu Qinghe, Lo Ch'ing, Wu Yi, Xu Lei, Yang Yanping, Yuan Jai, Zeng Shanqing, Zeng Xiaojun, and Zhu Daoping.

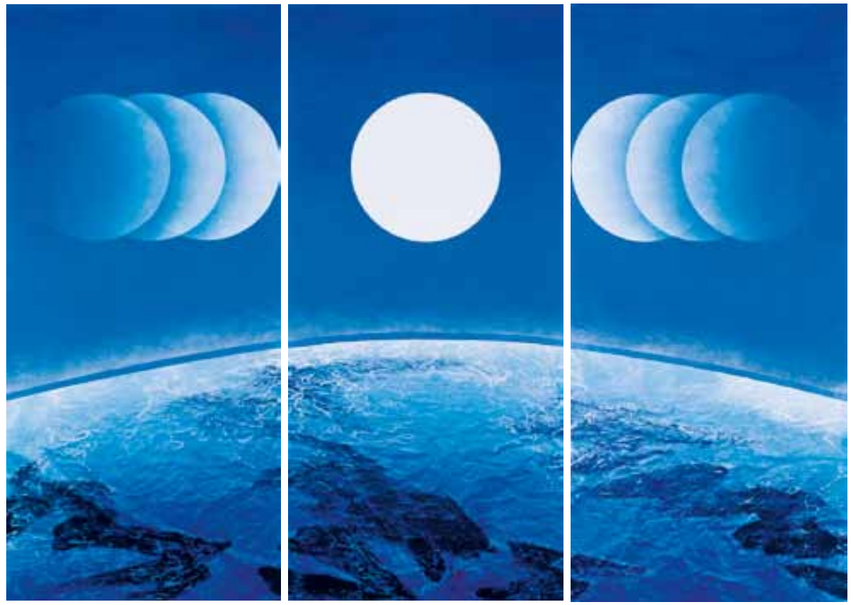
SYNTHESIZERS

These artists use ink and other media and combine Chinese and non-Chinese styles. Artists in this category include: Huang Yong Ping, Chun-yi Lee, Leung Kui Ting, Li Jun, Liu Kuo-sung, Liu Wei, Lu Hao, Pan Hsin-hua, Qin Feng, Qiu Deshu, Qiu Jie, Wang Dongling, Wang Jinsong, Wei Ligang, Wucius Wong, Hong Chun Zhang, and Zhang Yu.

INTERROGATORS

Artists in whose works the historical and cultural relevance of the medium of ink is questioned and the physical and chemical properties of ink are explored. They include: Chen Guangwu, Gu Gan, Wenda Gu, Qiu Zhijie, Wang Tiande, Wei Qingji, Xu Bing, and Yang Jiechang.

Another possible way to begin our journey is perhaps to further divide contemporary Chinese ink painting (including but not limited to works featured in this exhibition) into the following stylistic or thematic categories, keeping in mind that some artists belong to more than one category, as indicated in the list:



Liu Kuo-sung
Rhythm of the Moon, 2005 (p. 110)

1 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TRADITIONAL AESTHETICS OF *BIMO* (BRUSH AND INK)

Fang Jun, Ho Huai-shuo, Leung Kui Ting, Li Huayi, Li Xubai, Liu Dan, Liu Kuo-sung, Lo Ch'ing, Tong Yang-tze, Wang Dongling, Wang Jinsong, Wucius Wong, Zeng Shanqing, Zeng Xiaojun, Yang Yanping, and Hong Chun Zhang.

2 ABSTRACTION

Liu Kuo-sung, Gao Xingjian, Gu Gan, Qin Feng, Wang Tiande, Wei Ligang, and Xu Bing.

3 NEW EXPRESSIONISM

Gu Gan, Li Jin, Li Jun, Liu Qinghe, Li Xiaoxuan, Wang Dongling, Wang Jinsong, and Zhu Daoping.

4 CONSTRUCTED COSMOS

Liu Kuo-sung, Qiu Deshu, Yang Jiechang, Zhang Yu.

5 MONUMENTAL LANDSCAPE

Jia Youfu, Liu Kuo-sung, Wenda Gu, Zhang Yu.

6 REGENERATION OF THE DECORATIVE & BLUE-AND-GREEN TRADITIONS

Yuan Jai, Pan Hsing-hua, Xu Lei

7 INVESTIGATION OF INK AS A MEDIUM

Chen Guangwu, Wenda Gu, Qin Feng, Qiu Zhijie, Wang Tiande, Yang Jiechang

8 SOCIAL COMMENTARIES

Huang Zhiyang, Chun-yi Lee, Li Jin, Lu Hao, Miao Xiaochun, Qiu Zhijie, Qiu Jie, Wei Qingji, Wu Yi, Xu Bing, Hong Chung Zhang.

Perhaps the most salient feature of contemporary Chinese ink painting is the audacity and radicalism inherent in the artists' analysis, not only of the very nature of ink painting, but also its theoretical parameters (explored in Xu Bing's 'An Email on Modern Art and Education' first published in the proceedings of the 2009 Beijing International Conference on Art Theory and Criticism, pages 375–383). Several artists in this exhibition have been included in a series



Qiu Zhijie
Ten Poems by Su Shi, 2004
(p. 124)

of shows, both inside and beyond the Chinese-speaking world, which address the role of ink in contemporary culture. As clarified by Pi Daojian, curator with Huang Huansheng of the exhibition *China: 20 Years of Ink Experiment, 1980 – 2001* held at the Guangdong Museum in 2001, the term 'Ink Experiment' was intended to highlight the fact that the experiments of contemporary Chinese artists go far beyond simple ink *painting* and now extend to expressive ink art, abstract ink art, conceptual ink art and installation ink art.

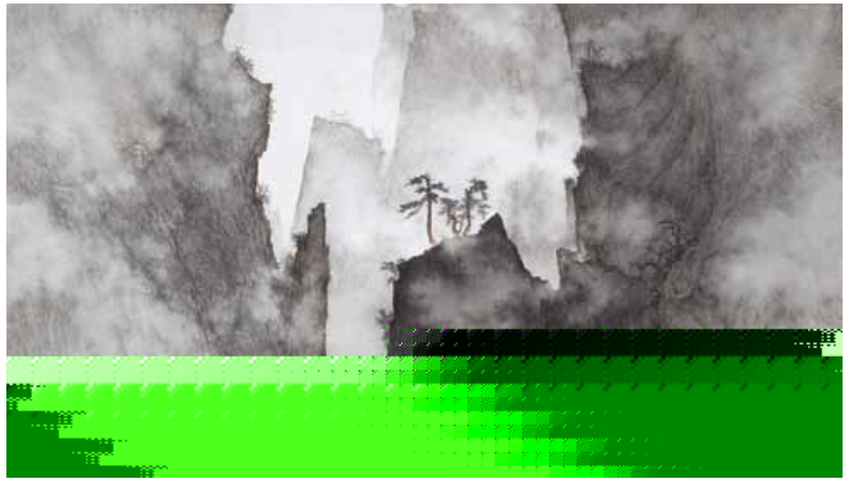
Traditionally, the ink used by Chinese artists for calligraphy and painting was made in the form of dry ink sticks – chiefly pine soot and water-soluble animal adhesive – that were ground with water on an ink stone to produce liquid ink. Contemporary artists also now use commercially prepared liquid ink for convenience. Artists control the density, texture and quality of their ink and, by extension, its tonal variations and it is this ability by which the quality of their work has traditionally been evaluated. Ink's liquidity of course poses tremendous challenges for the practitioner in addition to the demands placed on them by using a pliant brush made from animal hairs. The Neo-Traditionalists in the exhibition are particular heirs of this grand tradition of Chinese ink painting which goes back, as an elite art-form, more than a thousand years. Liu Dan, Li Huayi, and Zeng Xiaojun are all painters who trace their cultural lineage back to the great masterpieces of the Song dynasty, while at the same time responding to the pictorial imperatives of the contemporary world.

For a related but different interpretation of this tradition take the work of Gao Xingjian for example. Gao received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2000 and now lives in Paris in semi self-exile. His style of painting can be characterised as belonging to the great literati tradition of *Xieyi* (literally 'writing of the idea') which allows him to create subtle, intuitive settings that hover between figurative and abstract art in a way that has been done by many of the great masters in Chinese art history. His paintings explore the expressive possibilities of ink and wash, advanced chiaroscuro shadings and subtle textures.

On the other hand, other artists are challenging this traditional use of the medium of ink, using video documentation and installation in conjunction with ink on paper as in Qiu Zhijie's *Ten Poems by Su Shi*.

Wenda Gu, who is here represented by two of the monumental paintings that exemplify the intense investigation he has conducted into the nature of art and language since 1984, also deploys other materials in complex installations. At Bates College in 2004 for example, his *Ink Alchemy* presented glass vials of ink created from human hair where his intention was to unify biological ink (from hair) with the materials of subject (the common denominator of humanity) and the medium (ink for painting).

Reflecting on the development of ink painting since the early 1990s, the artist Zhang Yu has written: 'Experimental ink painting grows out of the root of Chinese art and culture. At the same time, experimental ink painting differs from the formal language of traditional



Li Huayi
Autumn Mountains,
2008 (p. 32)

Chinese painting . . . it opens a new path outside the traditional system of ink paintings and takes the resources of Chinese and foreign art as the starting point of exploration . . . so, it transcends not only the physical and metaphysical, but also the Eastern and Western. What it possesses is new concepts, new ways of understanding the world, new modes of speaking and new views of cultural value'.

The exhibition certainly provides a great opportunity for the public to examine these artists in order to explore the extent to which this work can be seen as a bold and relevant embodiment of the zeitgeist of a new generation of Chinese people in the Chinese-speaking world as well as in the diaspora. It also describes the enrichment of an essentially Chinese aesthetic through the incorporation of Euro-American stylistic and ideological innovations that have value in newly defining Chinese ideas about beauty, the diaspora, trans-nationalism and global culture.

But it also leaves us suspended with questions, the answers to which, in the dramatic transformation of modern China, have yet to be formulated: how extensively can tradition be re-invented before it is subverted? At what point is creative re-invention an act of betrayal? And finally, how has selective borrowing from the Chinese classical canon and from Western cultures enabled contemporary Chinese artists to make work that is relevant and meaningful not only for their own society, vital as it now is, but for an increasingly globalized world?

In the following pages, the relative width of the artwork is indicated by a line placed on a standard ruler whose full length is 8 *metres* (26¼ *feet*)

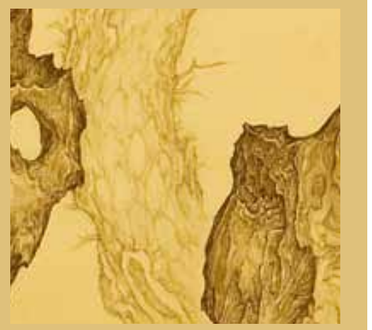


LI HUAYI
李华弋

Rock and Pine, 2008



Ink on paper with gold ground, two fold screen
170 × 185cm (66⅞ × 72⅝")

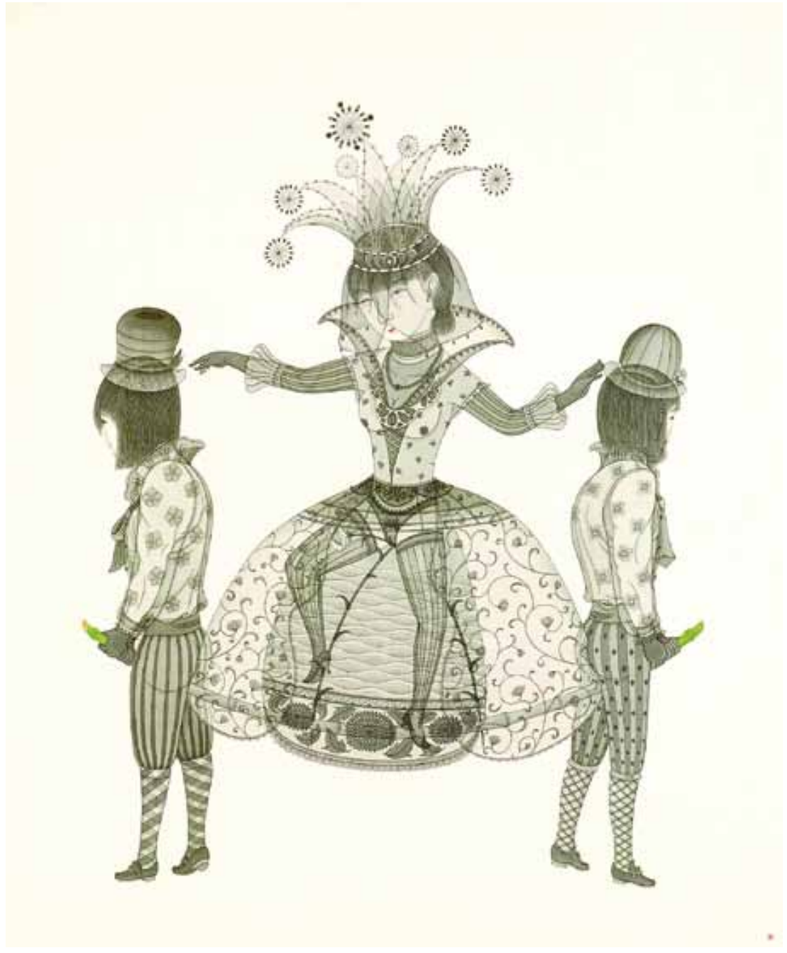


WILSON SHIEH
石家豪

L: *Family Ride*, 2008

R: *The Queen*, 2007





L: Ink and gouache on silk
90 × 75cm (35⁷⁄₁₆ × 29½")

R: Ink and gouache on silk
90 × 75cm (35⁷⁄₁₆ × 29½")

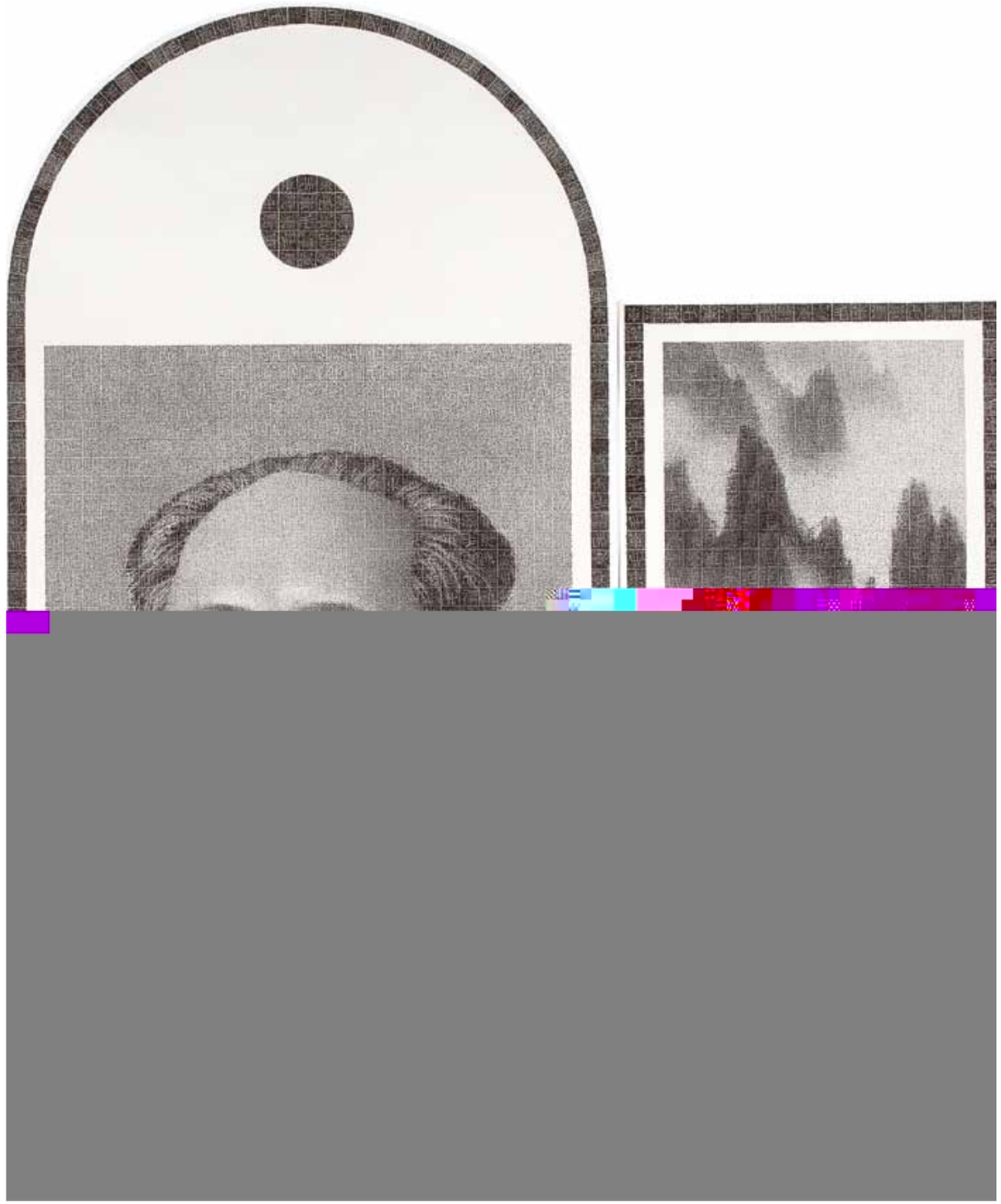


CHUN-YI LEE
李君毅

Mao Triptych: Wan Sui, Wan Shui, Wan Wan Sui, 2008

Ink on paper
3 panels, large panel 244 × 122cm (96 × 48")
2 smaller panels, 182.5 × 76cm (72 × 30") each
Total size: 244 × 274cm (96 × 108")



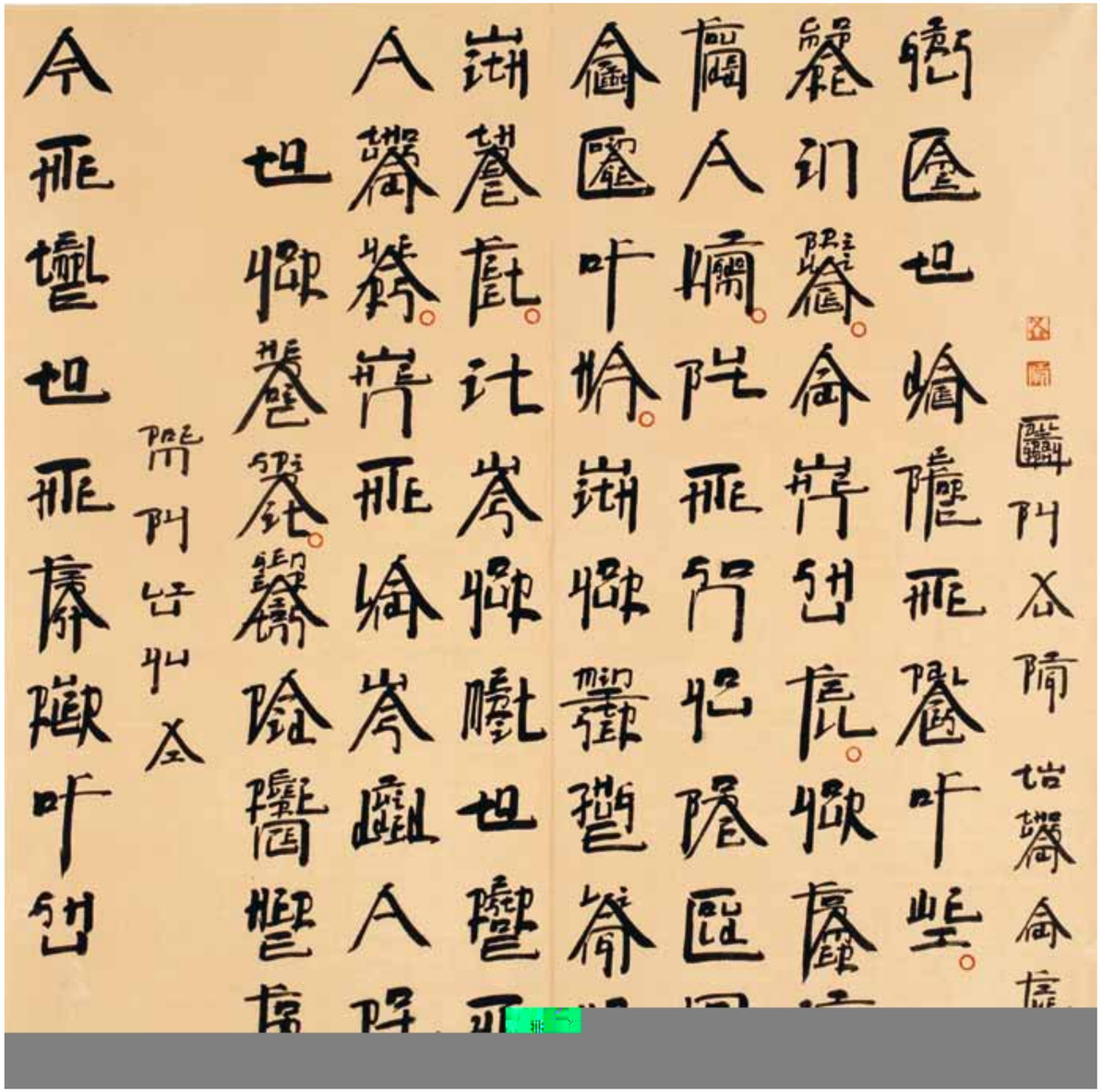


XU BING
徐冰

At the Temple to the First Ruler of Shu, Poem by Liu Yuxi, Square Word Calligraphy, 2005

Ink on paper
2 panels, 134.6 × 68.6cm (53 × 27") each
Total size: 134.6 × 137.2cm (53 × 54")





CHEN KEZHAN
陈克湛

Red–Autumn, 2011



Ink and mineral colours on paper
149 × 369cm (58 1⁄16 × 145 1⁄4")



LIU QINGHE
刘庆和

Portrait of Li Ming, 2010

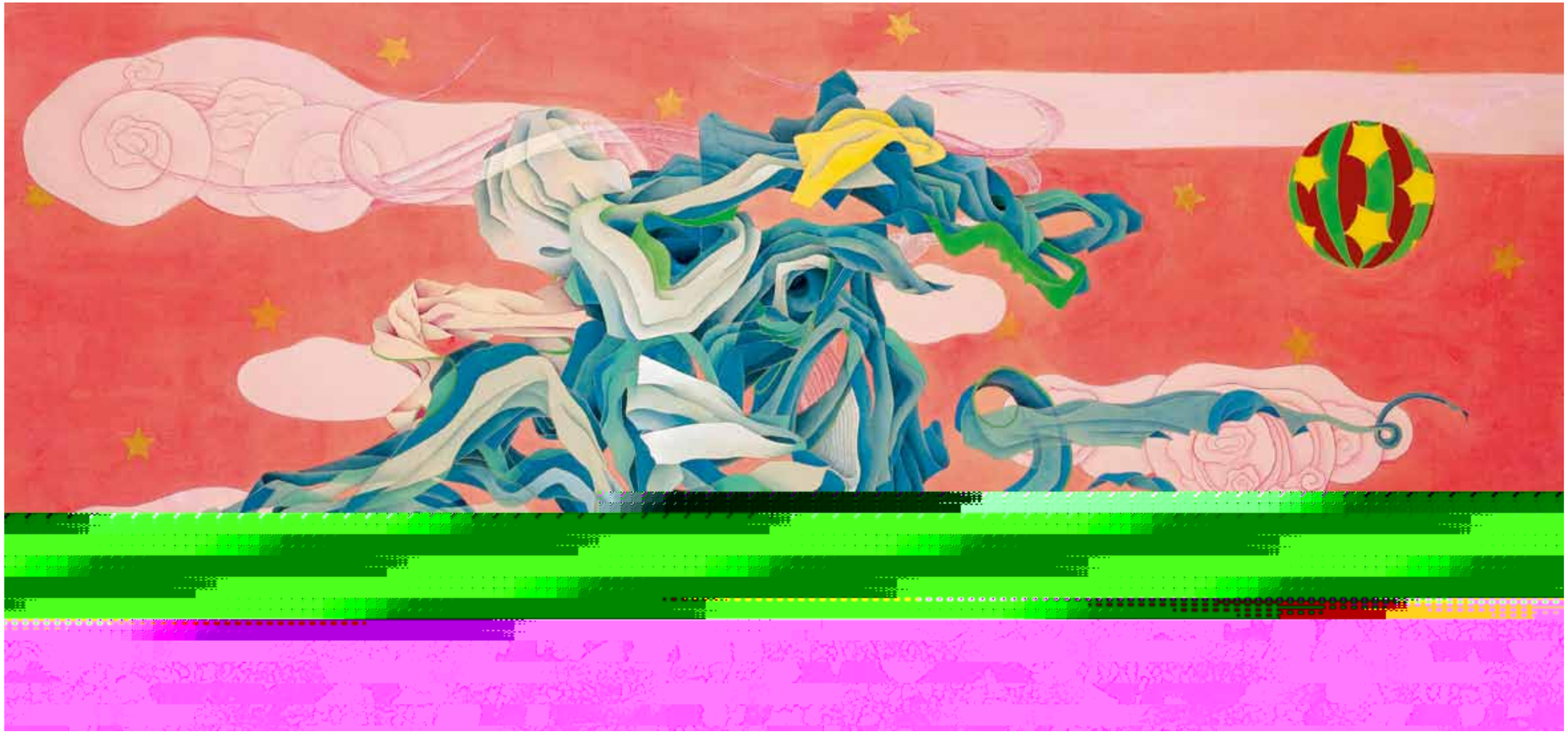
Ink and colour on paper
200 × 90cm (78¾ × 35⅜")





YUAN JAI
袁旃

Little Dragon Playing Ball, 2001



Mineral colour on silk
84 × 179cm (33⅛ × 70½")



ZHU DAOPING
朱道平

Delicate Fragrance, 2006



Ink and colour on paper
65 × 130cm (25⅝ × 51⅛")

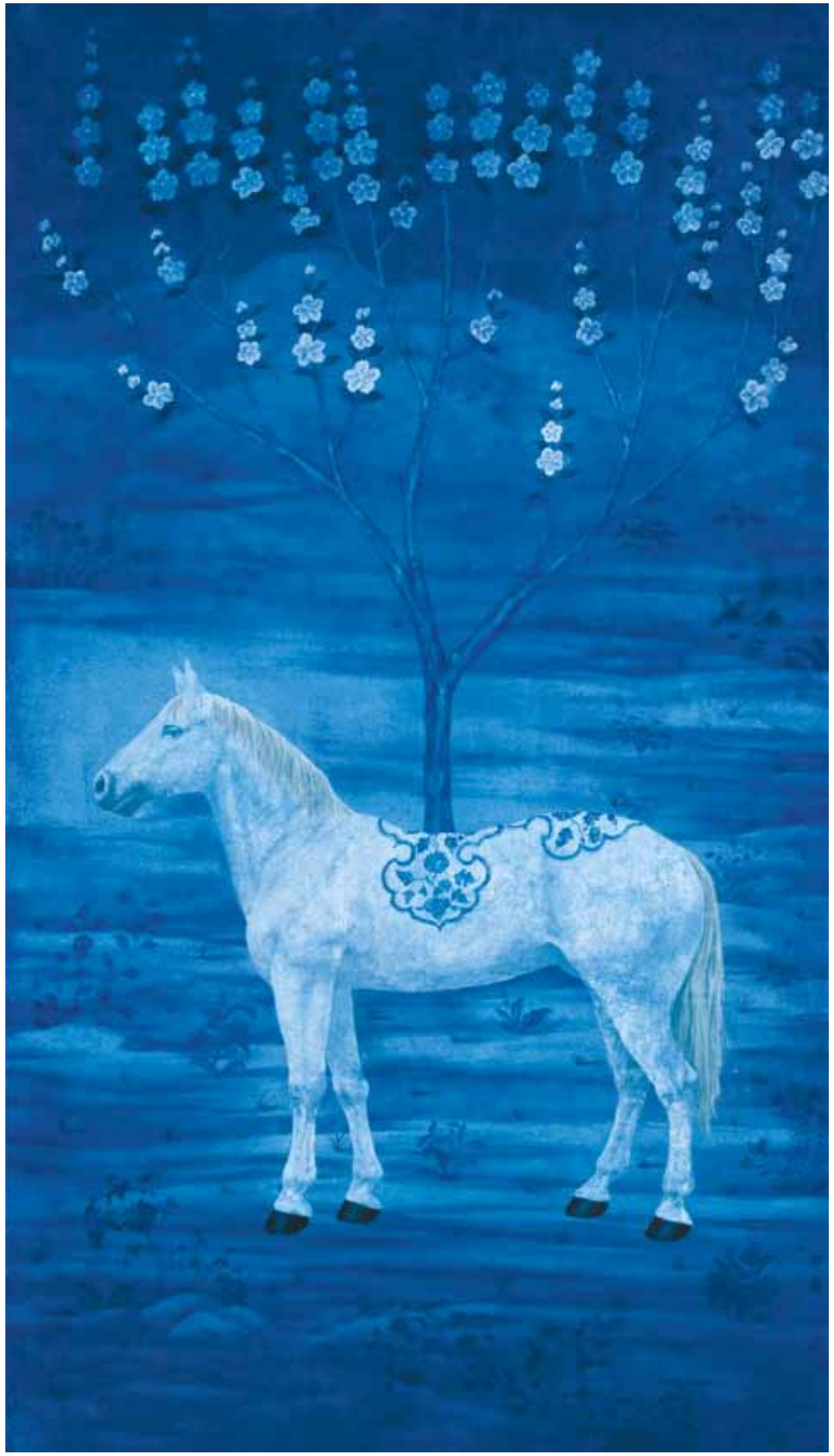


XU LEI
徐累

Tree of Blue Underglaze, 2008

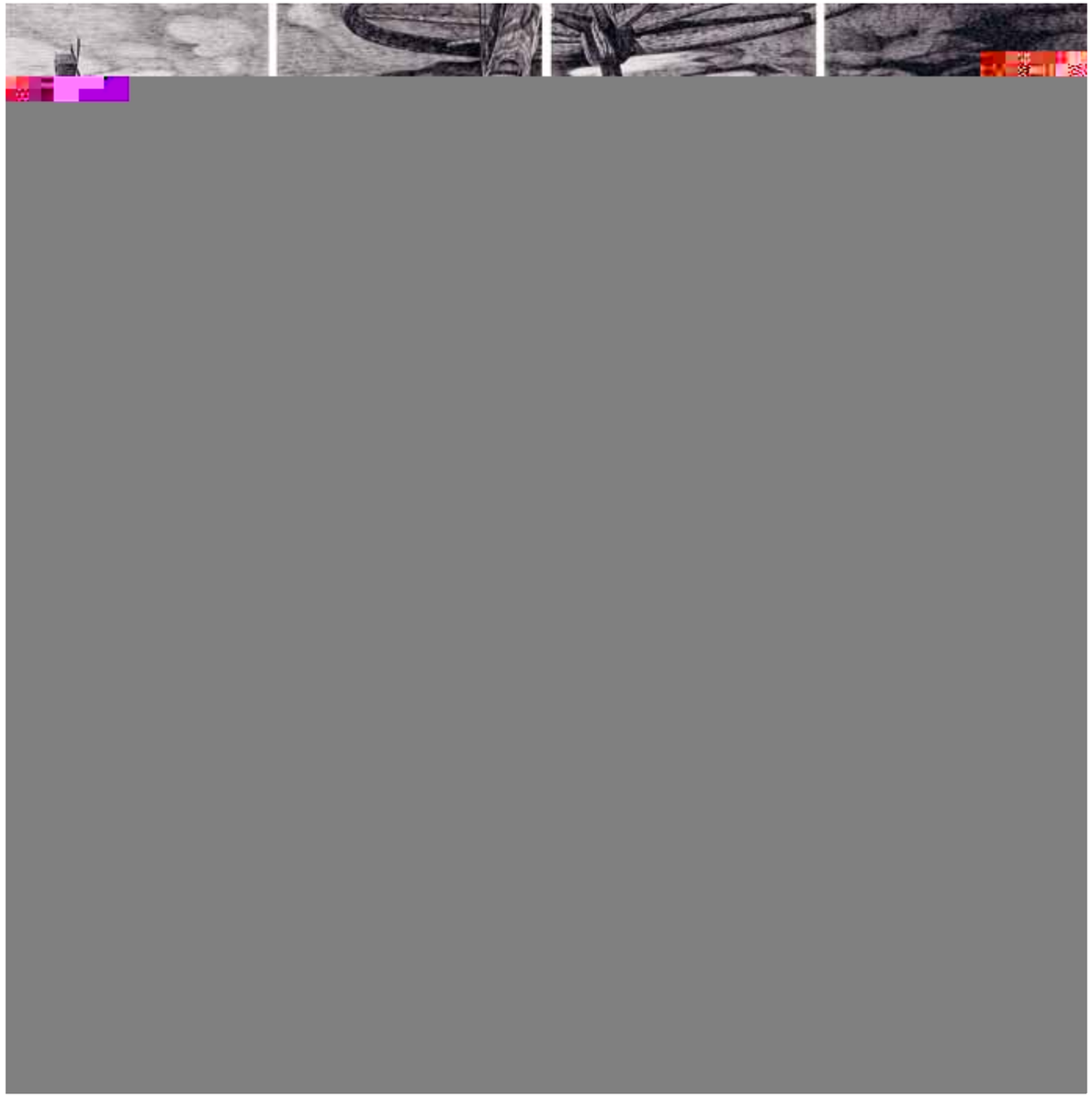
Ink and colour on paper
213 × 125cm (83⅞ × 49³⁄₁₆")





MIAO XIAOCHUN
缪晓春

Carrying the Cross, 2008



Pen and ink on paper
18 panels, 76.6 × 56.6cm (30⅛ × 22⅜") each
Total size: 229.8 × 339.6cm (90½ × 133¾")



LIU WEI
刘炜

Untitled, 2006

Acrylic on paper
94 × 57.2cm (37 × 22½")

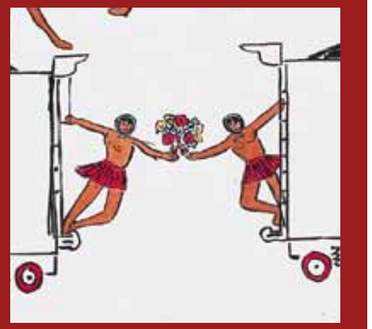




WU YI
武艺

Xin Mapo Series III, 2004

Ink and colour on paper
200 × 200cm (78¾ × 78¾")



LIU DAN
刘丹

Old Cypress from the Forbidden City, 2007

Ink on paper
259.1 × 137.2cm (102 × 54")





LIU DAN
刘丹

Poppy, 2008

Ink on paper
215 × 150cm (84⅝ × 59")





LO CH'ING
罗青

China, All of a Sudden, China!, 2012



Ink and colour on paper
Two panels, 137 × 69cm (53⅞ × 27¼") each
Total size: 137 × 138cm (53⅞ × 54⅜")



LO CH'ING
罗青

Ten Thousand Peaks of Red Leaves, 1996

Ink and colour on paper
212 × 90.5cm (83⅜ × 35⅝")





WANG DONGLING
王冬龄

Untitled, 2006

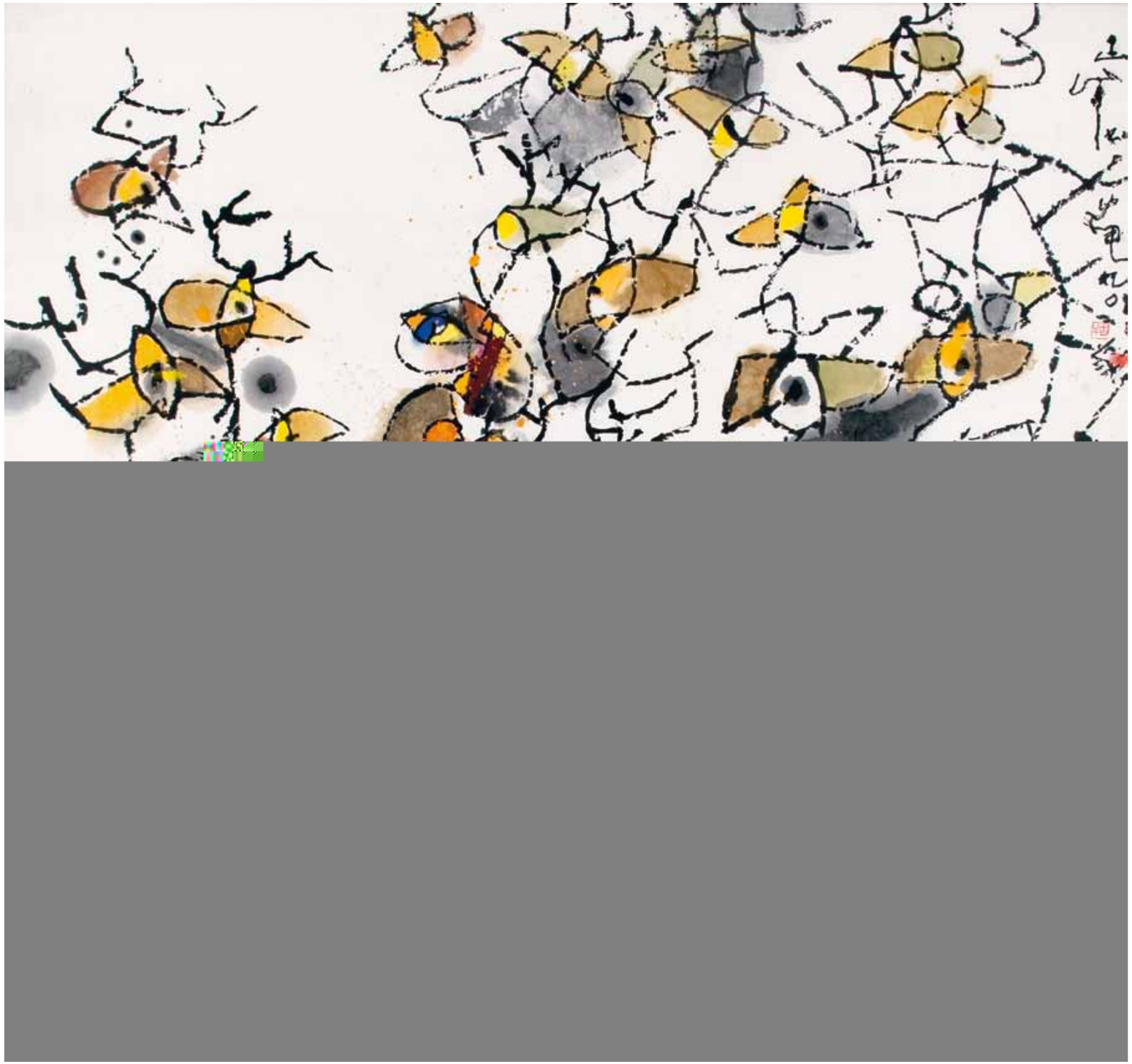
Ink on paper
140 × 310cm (55⅛ × 122")

GU GAN
古干

Deer Crying, 1990

Ink and colour on paper
93 × 98cm (36½ × 38½")



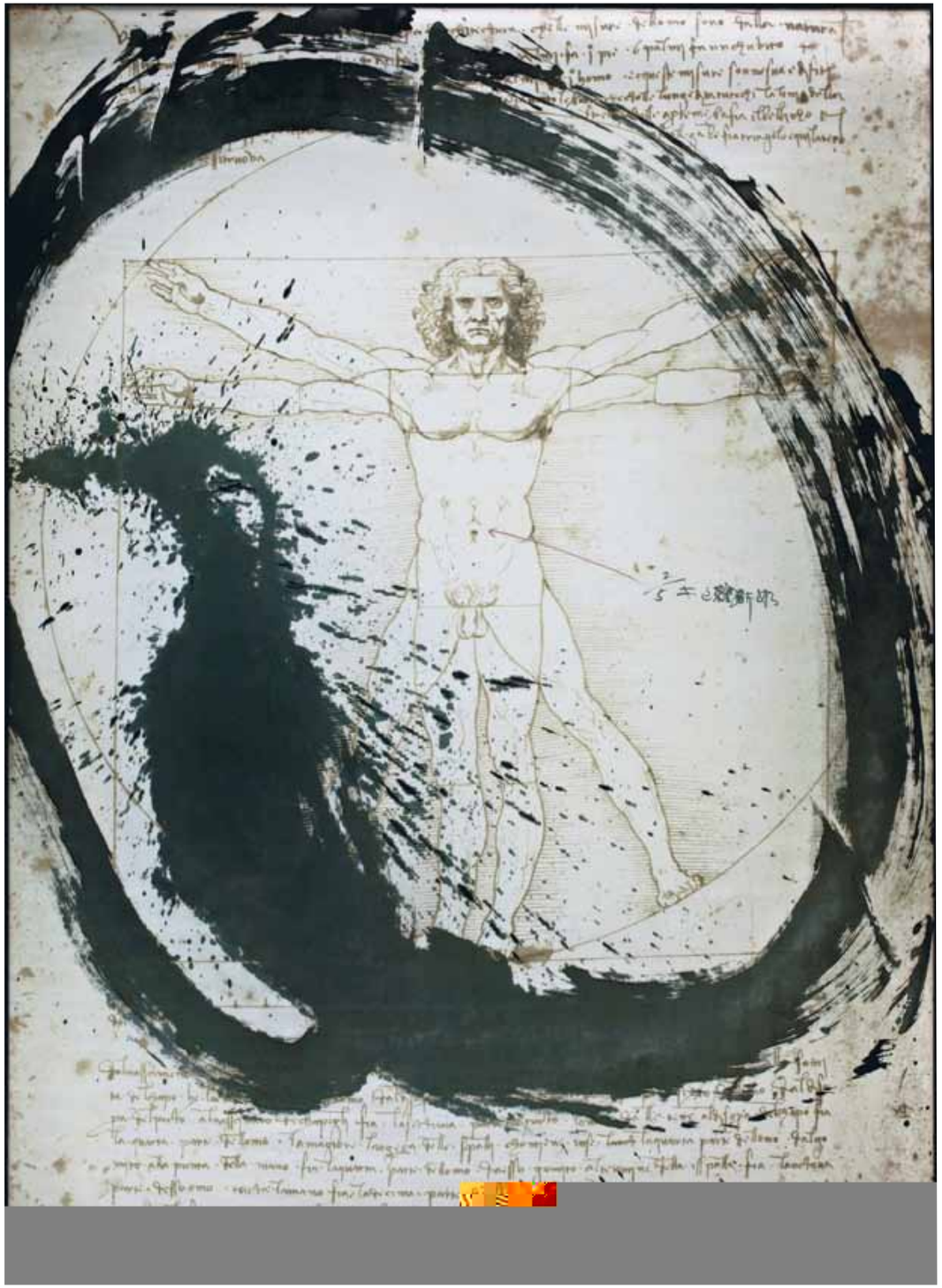


QIN FENG
秦风

Song of God 3, 2007

Silk, ink and glass
250 × 150cm (98⅜ × 59⅛")





LU HAO
卢昊

True Landscape, 2012

Ink and colour on paper
150 × 200cm (59⅛ × 78¾")



LIU KUO-SUNG
刘国松

The Universe is My Heart No. 4,
1998

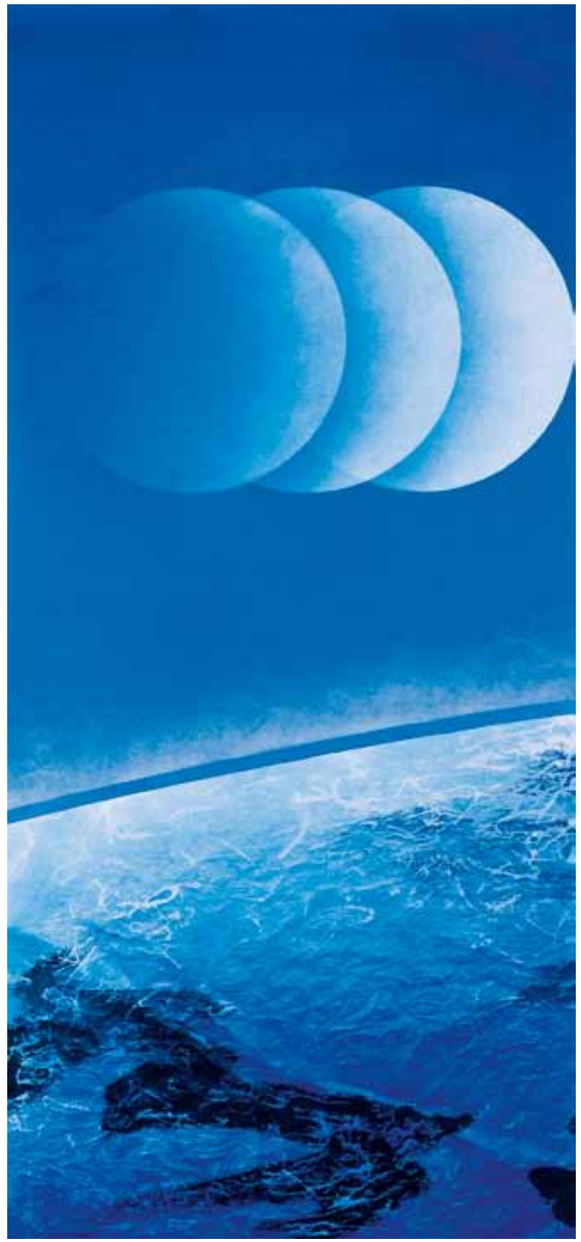
Ink on paper
4 panels, 181.5 × 87.6cm (71½ × 34½") each
Total size: 181.5 × 350.5cm (71½ × 138")

LIU KUO-SUNG
刘国松

Rhythm of the Moon, 2005

Ink and colour on paper
198 × 273cm (77¹⁵⁄₁₆ × 107½")









ZENG XIAOJUN
曾小俊

'Qing', 'Qi', 'Gu', 'Guai', 2004



Ink on paper
199 × 467cm (78½ × 183¾")



WUCIUS WONG
王无邪

Sky-Land Expression 1, 2007

Ink and colour on cotton
2 panels, 198.1 × 99.1cm (78 × 39") each
Total size: 198.1 × 198.2cm (78 × 78 1/32")



FAY KU
顧詠惠

Women Warriors, 2008



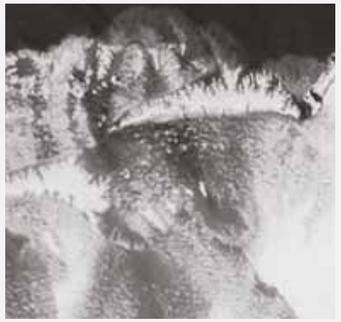
Graphite, watercolour, gouache
and ink on paper
106.7 × 487.7cm (42 × 192")



GAO XINGJIAN
高行建

Dream Mountain
(La montagne de rêve), 2005

Ink on paper
146 × 207cm (57½ × 81½")

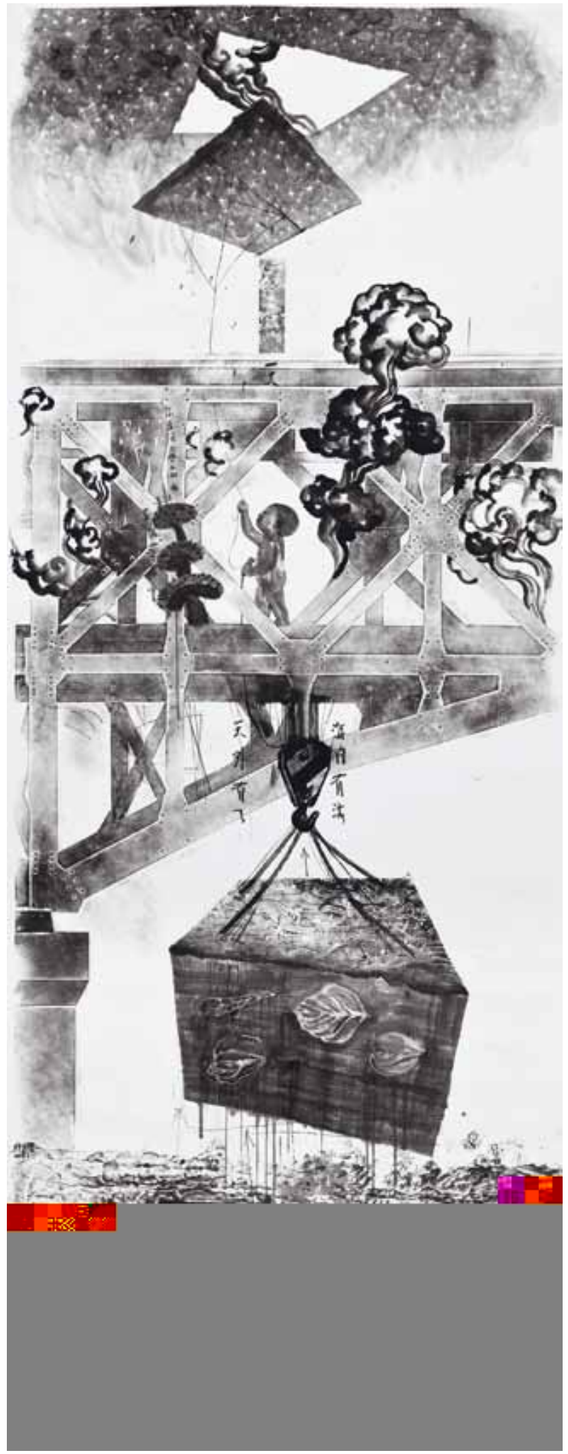


QIU ZHIJIE
邱志杰

30 Letters to Qiu Jiawa No. 22: Beyond sky there is sky, within the sea there is sea
30 Letters to Qiu Jiawa No. 23: An exit from a tunnel is not always only where the light is
30 Letters to Qiu Jiawa No. 24: In their contests, you do not have to become a winner, 2009

Ink on paper
3 panels, 510 × 190cm (200 13/16 × 74 13/16") each
Total size: 510 × 570cm (200 13/16 × 224 3/8")





LI JIN
李津

Spring in the Garden, 2012

Ink and colour on paper
138 × 69cm (54⁵⁄₁₆ × 27³⁄₁₆")



JIA YOUFU
贾又福

Landscape, 1985

Ink and colour on paper
48.5 × 326cm (19⅛ × 128⅜")







WANG JINSONG
王劲松

Landscape No. 10, 2008

Ink on paper
90 × 72cm (35⁷⁄₁₆ × 28⅜")





WANG JINSONG
王劲松

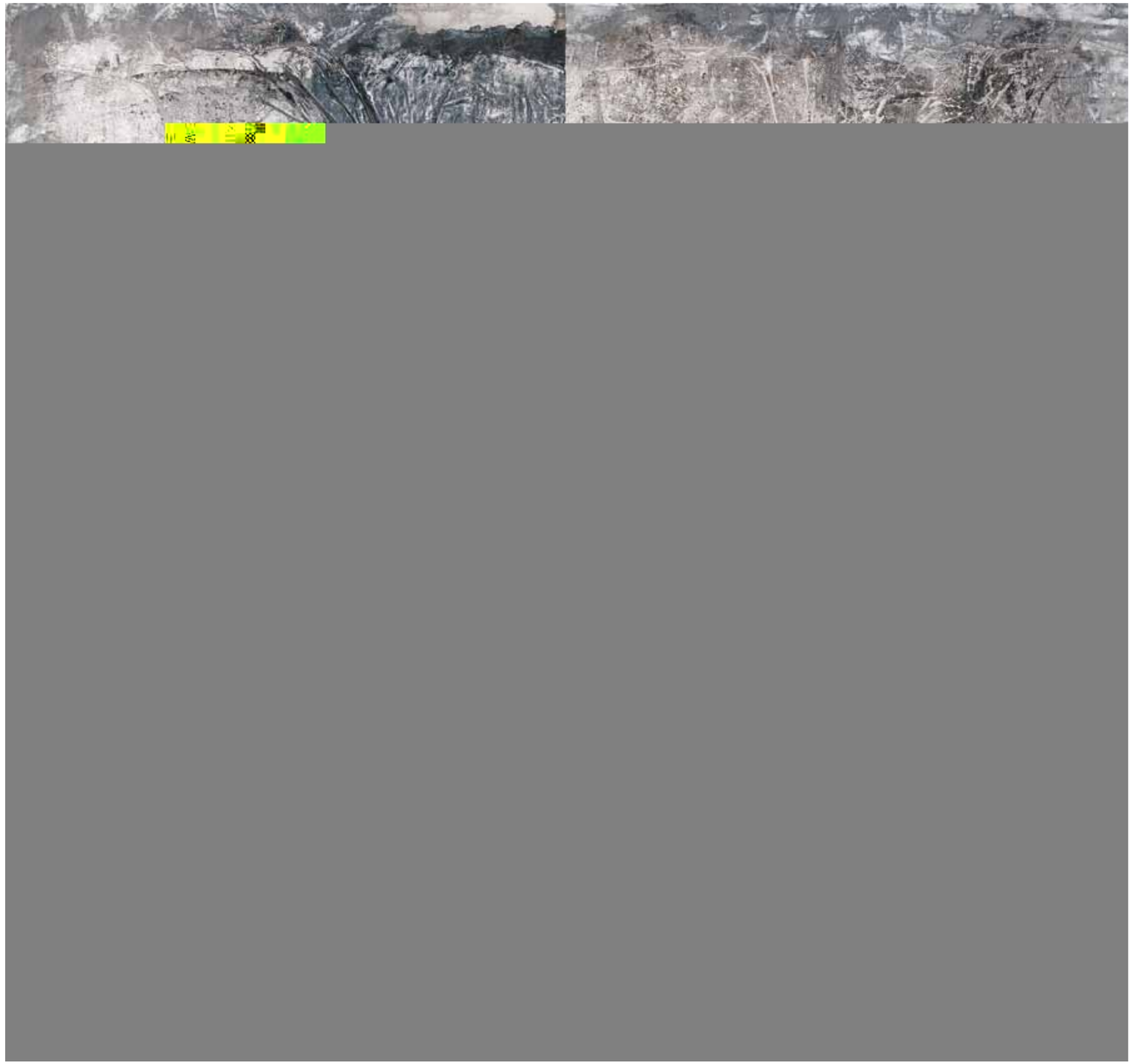
The Deluge No. 1, 2012

Ink on paper
5 panels, 137 × 68 cm (53 15/16 × 26¾") each
Total size: 137 × 340 cm (53 15/16 × 133⅞")



ZHENG CHONGBIN
鄭重賓

Four definitions 001, 2011



Ink and acrylic on paper
177.8 × 190.5cm (70 × 75")



PAN GONGKAI
潘公凯

Rhythm, 2009

Ink on paper
180 × 97.5cm (71 × 38¼")





WEI LIGANG
魏立刚

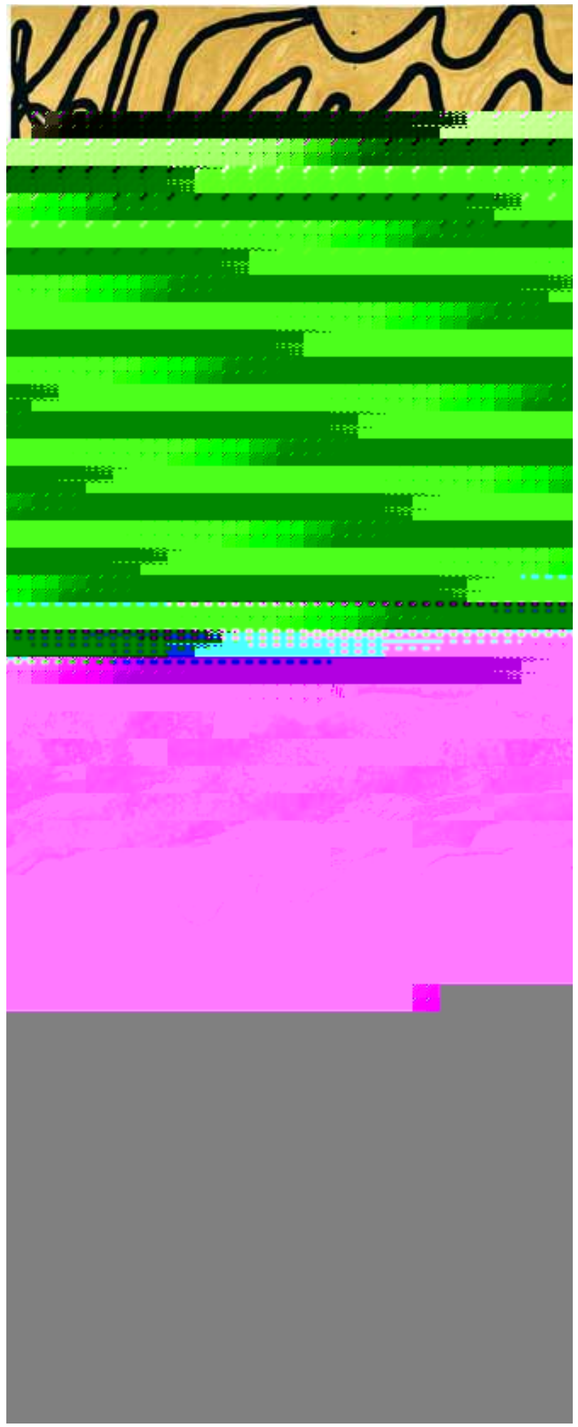
L: *Frozen River*, 2007

R: *Fragrant Thornbush Near Streamhead and Butterflies on the Bank*, 2007

L: Ink and acrylic on paper
360 × 145cm (141¾ × 57⅛")
R: Ink and acrylic on paper
360 × 145cm (141¾ × 57⅛")







LEUNG KUI TING
梁巨廷

Zan Zak Zen–09, 2007



Ink on silk
84 × 208cm (33⅛ × 81⅞")



YANG JIECHANG
杨诘苍

Tomorrow Cloud Sky-Purple, 2005



Ink and colour on silk
141 × 218cm (55½ × 85¹³⁄₁₆")



HUANG ZHIYANG
黄致阳

Zoon–Beijing Creature No. 7-17, 2007

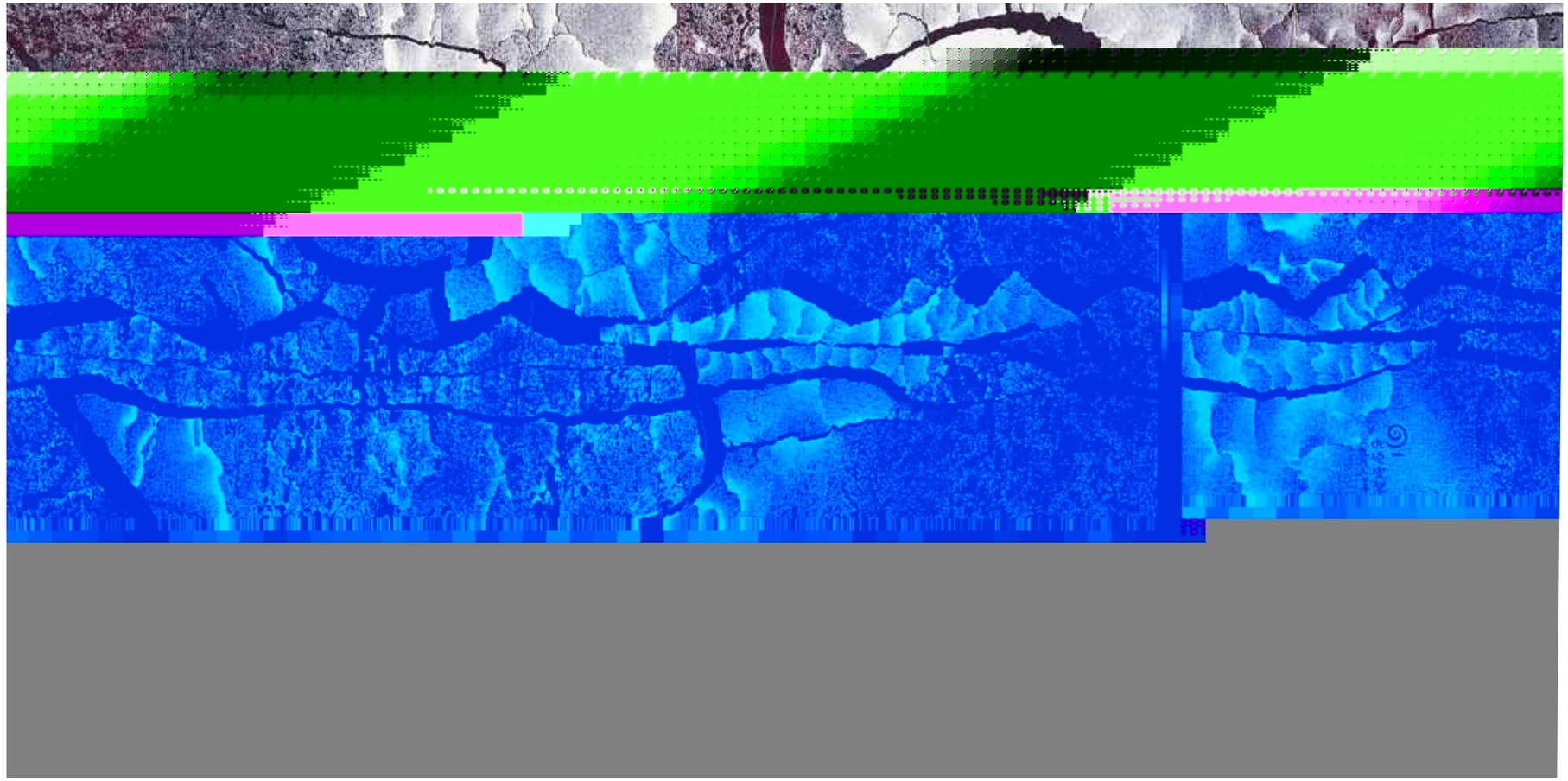
Ink on silk
2 panels, 475 × 140cm (187 × 55⅛") each
Total Size: 475 × 280cm (187 × 110¼")



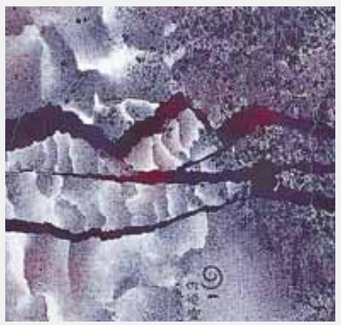


QIU DESHU
仇德树

Self-Portrait (Spirit), 1997-1998

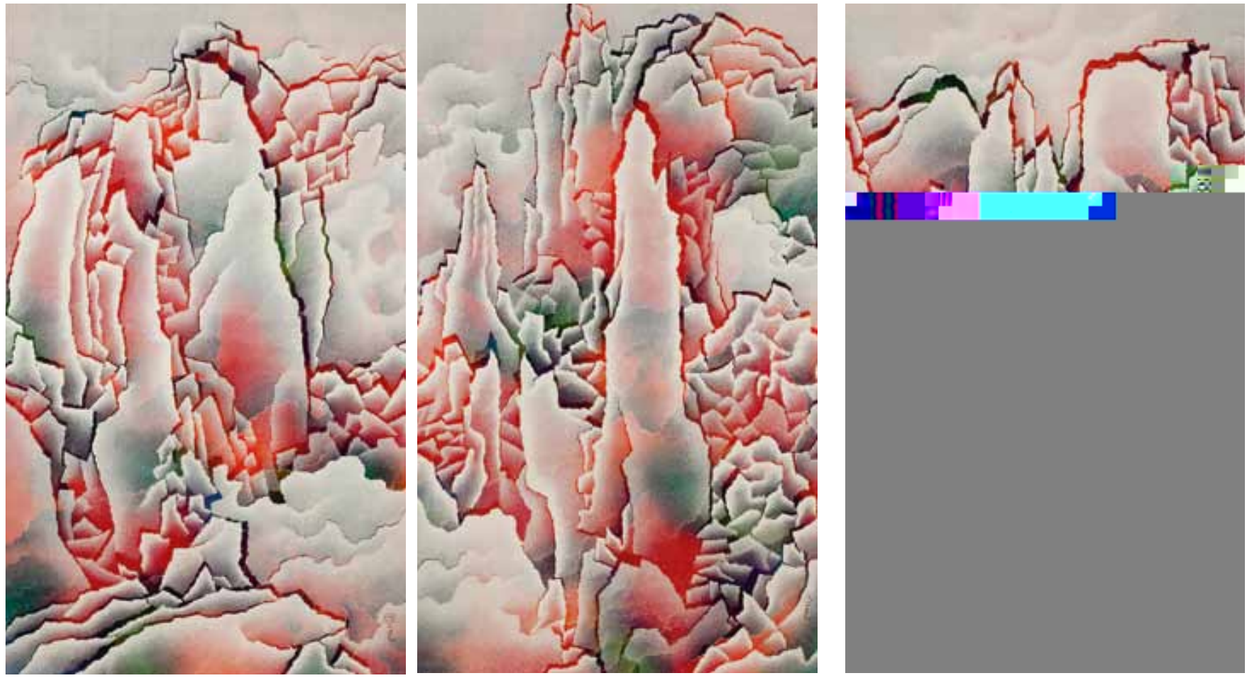


Ink and acrylic on paper and canvas
180 × 360cm (70¾ × 141½")



QIU DESHU
仇德树

Five-Panel Mountainscape, 2005



Ink and acrylic on paper and canvas
5 panels, 210 × 125.5cm (82 11/16 × 49 7/16") each
Total size: 210 × 627.5cm (82 11/16 × 247")



WENDA GU
谷文达

The Mythos of Lost Dynasties,
C Series No. 6 Cloud & Water,
1996-1997

Ink on paper, scroll with silk-border mounting
335.3 × 149.9cm (132 × 59")





a translator while writing novels and painting. During the Cultural Revolution he was sent to the countryside for reeducation and burned some of his manuscripts. In the 1980s, he published experimental literature as well as nonfiction, but after one of his plays was banned in 1986, Gao retreated to nature and spent ten months in the mountains of Sichuan. In 1987, Gao Xingjian moved to Paris where he still lives. The expressive paintings that spring from Gao's introspection are characterized by a spontaneity of touch, and their ink tones that range from subtle grays to jet blacks can either absorb or emit light. His style can be characterized as that of 'writing of the idea' (literally, *xieyi*), which allows him to create subtle, intuitive works that move between figurative and abstract art.



GU GAN

b. 1942, Changsha, Hunan

Gu Gan is internationally recognized as a key pioneer of the modernist movement in calligraphic painting in China. Gu turned to calligraphy during the 1960s. Interested in modern art, especially Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Joan Miró, Gu Gan started to experiment with radical approaches to calligraphy in the late 1970s. Excited at the prospect of reinvigorating Chinese calligraphy, together with Huang Miaozi and others, Gu staged a group exhibition of modernist calligraphy at the China National Art Gallery in Beijing in 1985, which earned him the position of chairman of the Society of Modern Calligraphy and Painting. In most of his works, Gu Gan combines traditional Chinese characters with abstract painting. He has created a new pictorial language that reverses the traditional relationship between calligraphic form and content, and his writings and lectures have had an important impact on the development of modernist calligraphy.



HUANG ZHIYANG

b. 1965, Taipei, Taiwan

Huang Zhiyang studied traditional Chinese ink painting in Taiwan. When installation art became a popular art form in Taiwan during the 1990s, Huang used all kinds of media, such as phone cords, oyster shells, fabrics, and ceramics, to make installation works. He returned to ink painting in the late 1990s and experimented with traditional texture-stroke techniques (*cun*) to create a new visual language inspired by the imagery of nature. He moved to Beijing in 2006, and was immediately both attracted to and dismayed by this burgeoning city. The series of Zoon – Beijing Creatures is a record of his mixed feelings for the city, which led him to create a pictorial space with various forms of insects, plants, and even microorganisms. For him, the living space of human beings is replete with bacteria and sickness, and these continue to contaminate our environment.



JIA YOUFU

b. 1942, Suning, Hebei

Jia Youfu graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, in 1965 where he is currently teaching. In 1992, Jia was awarded the title of 'Master Artist' by the PRC State Council. Deeply influenced by his teacher, the ink painting master Li Keran (1907–1989), Jia deploys a rich variety of brushstrokes in black and red to create a dark and mysterious landscape world. During his study at the Central Academy, he traveled nineteen times to the Taihang Mountain Range in northwestern China for closer observation of the landscape. Ever since, the grand landscape of Taihang Mountains has been the major subject in his paintings. Most of Jia Youfu's works have been contemporary interpretations of the traditional monumental landscapes of the late 10th and early 11th centuries. His paintings depict dark and ominous *mises-en-scènes* which, in the classic Chinese manner, dwarf any animals and humans below.



LEUNG KUI TING

b. 1945, Guangzhou, Guangdong

Leung Kui Ting moved to Hong Kong in 1948 and has held various teaching positions. In the 1990s he exhibited on the mainland and widely traveled there. A figure in Hong Kong's New Ink Painting movement that grew up around Lui Shou-kwan, Leung has experimented with many different styles that synthesize classical ink painting with modern art. However, the rocks, trees, and mountains that have been the subject of the literati painters over the past 600 years have remained his principal interest. In his series of paintings entitled Zan Zak Zen, he portrays the fantastically shaped Chinese scholar's rocks as if they were cliffs and mountains. In another series entitled Words from Stones, magically floating mountains, again evoking scholar's rocks, are juxtaposed with finely drawn diagrams and graphs, thus creating a world of tension, as well as resolution, between old and new.



LI HUAYI

b. 1948, Shanghai

Li Huayi began studying as a child and has become one of the most distinguished and internationally recognized Chinese artists of his generation. From a wealthy family, he was able to study both the techniques and styles of Chinese classical paintings as well as European drawing and painting. In 1982, Li moved to San Francisco where he earned an MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute. The expatriate experience reawakened his interest in the classical Chinese tradition of landscape painting and his best-known subjects are misty mountains. Li Huayi creates landscape paintings that are reminiscent of masterworks from the Song period (960–1279). However, instead of planning the composition beforehand, Li applies ink on the paper first, and then allows the composition to take shape in response to the density of the ink. This element of chance brings his work close to late- or post-modernist imperatives, combined with superlative aesthetic similarities to traditional landscape painting.



LI JIN

b. 1958, Tianjin

Li Jin is one of the best-known and most unorthodox ink painters in the so-called New Literati group of ink painters. Before his study in the Painting Department at the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts, where he now teaches, Li studied dyeing and weaving at the Tianjin Academy of Arts and Crafts, which partly explains his mastery of pattern and color. Li Jin gradually formed his uniquely playful style in the early 1990s, and is now famous for his seductive depictions of the good life. In contrast to the formality and stereotyped subjects of historical literati painting—often derived from famous texts, pictures by earlier masters, or both—food and wine and the simple things in today's life are Li's subject matter. The Falstaffian figure that appears repeatedly in his work is modelled on himself, and the flirtatious, enticing young women are the artist's ideal of female beauty.



LI XUBAI

b. 1940, Fuzhou, Fujian

Li moved to Hong Kong in 1979, where he has been the editor for art magazines such as *The World of Collectors* and *Dragon Roots Art Magazine* and went to Canada in 1996, where he now lives. Although he first taught himself western-derived painting, Li began to study Chinese classical literature, poetry, and landscape painting in the 1960s. His paintings are constructions of landscape elements without a specific relationship to any one geographical site. Li Xubai maintains his connection with the contemporary world by creating a seemingly flat pictorial space and a pixilated effect reminiscent of digital media. By choosing to paint in a classically derived style, Li Xubai asserts his cultural identity while working in a foreign land. The poems he inscribes on his paintings in traditional literatus fashion usually mention his foreign residence, echoing numerous inscriptions by painterly predecessors who wistfully invoked their own political exile.



LIU DAN

b. 1953, Nanjing, Jiangsu

Liu Dan has emerged as the most gifted of a particularly talented generation. He studied the Confucian classics, poetry, painting, and calligraphy from his grandfather at an early age. He moved to Hawaii when he married an American woman in 1981. There, he studied western art and matured as a painter. Liu Dan moved to New York in 1992, and after fourteen years he returned to China in 2006. Both his

training in traditional Chinese art and philosophy and his experience in the United States have greatly contributed to his sophisticated and very personal style. Liu Dan's ink paintings, whether of landscapes, scholar's rocks, or cypress trees, are all fastidiously conceived, complex works which highlight his concern to emphasize underlying compositional structure over virtuoso expressions of showy brushwork.



LIU KUO-SUNG
b.1932, Bangbu, Anhui

Liu Kuo-sung is universally recognized as one of the earliest and most important advocates and practitioners of modernist Chinese painting. He moved to Taiwan from China in 1949 and in 1956 graduated from the Fine Arts Department of the National Taiwan Normal University, in which he studied both traditional brush-and-ink and western-style painting techniques. As one of the cofounders of the Taiwan's Fifth Moon Painting Society (*Wuyue huahui*) in 1957, Liu Kuo-sung sought a new approach to art, which was inspired by both traditional Chinese painting as well as modern styles and techniques, such as Abstract Expressionism. By the mid-1960s, Liu gradually developed his own pictorial formulae, in which he combines ink painting with collage and applies ink and colour on special paper.



LIU QINGHE
b. 1961, Tianjin

Liu Qinghe graduated from the Tianjin Academy of Arts and Crafts in 1976, and later received graduate training from both the Folk Art Department and the Chinese Painting Department at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Over the years, Liu has sought to find ways to make ink painting relevant to contemporary life and has created a series of paintings that focus on fleeting moments in people's daily lives. His broad brushstrokes and vivid draftsmanship, derived from the long tradition of the conceptual sketch (*xieyi*) style, are used to enhance his depiction of the reality of individual human beings grappling with the hard realities of industrializing China. Water is a frequent subject in Liu Qinghe's paintings. Depicting the isolation and helplessness of the swimmers in the water, Liu evokes the crisis and pressure that people undergo in contemporary society.



LIU WEI
b. 1965, Beijing

Liu Wei, one of the most audacious avant-garde artists of his generation, graduated from the Printmaking Department at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1989, and he continues to live and work in Beijing. Liu was one of the first three Chinese artists to be included in the main exhibition of a Venice Biennale, in 1995. His versatility as an artist is remarkable. Liu Wei's early paintings, from the first half of the 1990s, have been characterized as Cynical Realism, an outgrowth of disillusion in the post-1989 era; most of these works are satires of political leaders, military cadres, and bureaucrats and are accomplished through free brushstrokes and distorted effects of *trompe l'oeil*. By contrast, since the second half of the 1990s, his works use splashing and spattering techniques, including painting wet into wet emphasizing the messy physicality and impulsive action of contemporary life.

LO CH'ING
b. 1948, Qingdao, Shandong

Lo Ch'ing is a poet, painter, and calligrapher. He moved to Taiwan in 1949. At an early age, Lo learned classical ink painting of the court tradition and subsequently he studied in the English Department of Fu Jen University, and received an MA degree in Comparative Literature from the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1974. He has been both a professor of literature and a professor of fine arts in universities in Taiwan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Prague, and mainland China. His poems have been published and translated into many languages, and Lo Ch'ing is regarded as one of the pioneers of post-modern poetry in Taiwan. He has also been a major innovator in ink painting, for which he has created a new visual vocabulary that deconstructs the classical forms of Chinese landscape by introducing into his compositions abstract and geometric elements as well as unexpected contemporary motifs.

LU HAO
b. 1969, Beijing

Scion of an old Beijing family of Manchu bannermen, Lu Hao is one of the brilliant new generation of artists in today's globalizing Chinese art world. He was appointed curator of the Chinese Pavilion for the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. Lu is deeply concerned about the brutal urban redevelopment of his native city and the loss of everything connected with the life of his childhood courtyard home. Although he studied Chinese ink painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, Lu is best known for his works with modern materials such as Plexiglas, used to create models of major public buildings inhabited with live creatures. He also utilizes his academic training in ink painting in an alternative approach to express his interest in architecture and current realities.

MIAO XIAOCHUN
b. 1964, Wuxi, Jiangsu

Miao Xiaochun is recognized as one of the most creative and technically sophisticated photographers in China today. After attending Nanjing University from 1986 to 1989 he completed a master's degree at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, and in 1995 he went to study at the Kunsthochschule Kassel, Germany. In 1999 Miao returned to live in Beijing, where he teaches in the Photography and Digital Media Department at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. His sojourn in Germany increased Miao's awareness of the fragmentation of contemporary Chinese society as well as imposing a recognition that neither the recent past of his own youth nor the classical past of China's high antiquity can ever be retrieved. While using modern technology to create highly detailed mural-sized photographs of cityscapes and landscapes, often depicted in a European art-historical context, Miao is also engaged in issues of cultural exchange. The meticulously executed drawing here, *Carrying the Cross*, 2008, is a rare work by Miao that reaches deep into European art history and delineates the historical background to the permanent status of conflict in religious and cultural life.

PAN GONGKAI
b. 1947, Ninghai, Zhejiang

The painter and art historian Pan Gongkai is the son of painter Pan Tianshou. He studied at the Zhejiang Academy of Art (now China Academy of Art). From November 1979 to November 1984 Pan was a lecturer in the Department of Chinese Painting, China Academy of Art, before becoming the head of the department in 1987. From 1992 to 1994 he was a visiting researcher at the University of California. In 1991 Pan was hailed by critics as "Literati with Special Contribution". From April 1996 to May 2001 he was the president of the China Academy of Art and was appointed president of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in June 2001.

PAN HSIN-HUA
b. 1966, Taitung, Taiwan

Pan Hsin-hua's brush-and-ink style is firmly rooted in the Chinese painting tradition. Currently living and teaching in Hualien, Taiwan, he graduated from Taipei National University of the Arts, and his works have been exhibited extensively in Taiwan. Pan skilfully blends both the past and the present in paintings that examine the relevance of tradition in contemporary culture. His archaism echoes the 'blue-and-green style' that uses opaque mineral pigments in a mode traditionally thought most appropriate for depicting idealized and utopian world. This follows in the mould of the masters of the late Song and early Yuan dynasties as well as those of the late Ming period who in turn evoked them. At the same time, Pan introduces an ironic and irreverent flavour into his work by integrating unconventional pictorial elements, often from other cultures, and usually of an explicitly contemporary and playful nature.



XU LEI
b. 1963, Nantong, Jiangsu

Xu Lei studied Chinese ink painting at the Department of Fine Arts of the Nanjing Art Academy and was a professional painter affiliated with the Jiangsu Institute of Chinese Painting. Based in Bejing, he now works at the Graduate School of the China Art Academy, serves as the art director of the Today Art Museum, and is editor-in-chief of the magazine *Classics*. Xu was an active participant in the innovative art movements in China in the late 1980s. He returned to ink painting in the 1990s. Well-versed in the classic fine-line (*gongbi*, detailed and elaborate) style of painting and influenced by traditional art, principally Song painting and woodcut illustrations from the Ming period, as well as by Surrealism and conceptual art, Xu Lei's beautiful paintings rarely incorporate human figures. His work was included in the major 1998 exhibition *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* organized by Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen at the Guggenheim Museum in New York.



YANG JIECHANG
b. 1956, Foshan, Guangdong

Yang Jiechang graduated from the Chinese Painting Department of that province's Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 1982. Afterwards he spent two years formally studying Daoism under the Master Huangtao at Mount Luofu, which had a profound influence on his art. Upon his marriage to the writer and critic Martina Köppel-Yang, he moved to Paris in 1988. Yang's extensive training in Chinese and European artistic traditions has given Yang Jiechang uncommon versatility: his works range from painting, collage, and sculpture to multimedia installation, site-specific works, and performance. Yang gained international recognition through the exhibition of his large monochrome ink paintings in *Les Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1989. He also exhibited in the landmark *China Avant/Garde* exhibition at Beijing's China National Art Gallery that year.



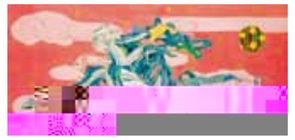
YANG YANPING
b. 1934, Nanjing, Jiangsu

Yang Yanping is one of the most distinguished contemporary ink painters from China. She studied architecture at Tsinghua University, where she married one of her painting teachers, Zeng Shanqing. After she graduated in 1958, and a brief spell of teaching factory design, Yang decided to study art at the Oil Painting Department of the Beijing Art Academy. At the same time she studied traditional Chinese painting on her own. In 1986, both Yang and her husband were awarded fellowships from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and they have remained in America ever since. Yang is well versed in many traditional styles but has excelled in depicting the lotus flower, a symbol of purity, transience, the fragility of nature, and the potential for regeneration. Yang's ideals of high visual quality and an artistic autonomy allows her to embrace modernism without jettisoning the lessons from the classical Chinese world of high culture.



YAO JUI-CHUNG
b. 1969, Taipei, Taiwan

Yao Jui-chung is now recognised as one of the most innovative Chinese artists of his generation. His work runs against the current of much of the mainstream avant-garde in its unabashed delight in producing a visual experience for the viewer that is beautiful as well as intellectually provocative. He is well-known for his works on paper, as well as his versatile experiments in photography, installation, performance, video and sculpture. He is also a curator, art-critic and art historian and has been dedicated to evaluating and promoting Taiwanese contemporary art both in Taiwan and internationally. He graduated from Taipei National University of the Arts and continues to teach at the University. He also represented Taiwan at the Venice Biennale in 1997.



YUAN JAI
b. 1941, Chongqing, Sichuan

Yuan Jai studied Chinese painting at the National Taiwan Normal University and received her MA degree from the Catholic University of Leuven in 1966. In 1968 she received her doctorate from the Royal Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Artifacts. Yuan's early interest in Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Cubism and Surrealism were fundamental to her later stylistic development. Upon returning to Taiwan, Yuan Jai worked for decades in the Department of Antiquities at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Her own paintings were originally inspired by landscapes in thick mineral pigments and often with primitive-looking or archaistic compositions, in the so-called blue-and-green style, which were often on display at the museum. The main pictorial source for her work has been examples of the master paintings in the museum, but Yuan Jai has integrated her own very contemporary structure to create artworks that have been streamlined into geometric elements of vibrant colour.

ZENG SHANQING
b. 1932, Beijing

Zeng Shanqing graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied under the distinguished painter Xu Beihong (1896–1953), whose ideal of combining Chinese ink painting with European styles of realistic drawing has deeply influenced Zeng. After finishing his graduate school in 1952, Zeng taught at the Central Academy. From that time, Zeng also lectured in the Department of Architecture at Tsinghua University; there he met and married his wife, the painter Yang Yanping. Zeng's career was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s, and he was not able to resume teaching and painting until 1976. In 1986, both Zeng and his wife went as fellows to the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and they have remained on Long Island ever since. Like his teacher, Xu Beihong, Zeng Shanqing's best-known subject is the horse. His powerful brushwork and dynamic compositional rhythms embody his profound sympathy for the values of political liberty.

ZENG XIAOJUN
b. 1954, Beijing

Zeng Xiaojun graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1981. He moved to the United States in 1983 and lived for the next fourteen years in Boston, where he exhibited and taught until 1997. Drawing inspiration from the literati landscape painting tradition, especially works by Shen Zhou (1427–1509) and Wen Zhengming (1470–1559) of the Ming period, Zeng extracts rocks and trees from the context of landscape and depicts them as isolated objects. Employing a delicate balance between dry and wet, lines and dots, his meticulously executed paintings remind us of the Chinese intellectuals' fascination with these subjects as embodiments of their own spiritual perseverance in times of difficulty and turbulence. Together the work of Liu Dan, Zeng Xiaojun's ink paintings are a powerful example of how the high culture of traditional China can be reinvigorated for contemporary society.

ZHANG CHUN HONG
b. 1971, Shenyang, Liaoning

Zhang Chun Hong grew up in an artistic family. Hong displayed her gift at an early age, and she was admitted into the high school affiliated to Beijing's prestigious Central Academy of Fine Arts at the age of 15, when she won a national competition. She continued her study at the Chinese Painting Department at the Central Academy until 1994, where she focused on meticulous figurative painting. In 1996, Hong came to the United States. Hong received an MFA degree from California State University, Sacramento, in 2002 and another from the University of California, Davis, in 2004. Currently teaching at the University of Kansas, Hong has made art about intercultural and gender issues, and is meticulously portraying long hair as a way of examining a woman's complete life cycle.